

LO/6N

XIV

4

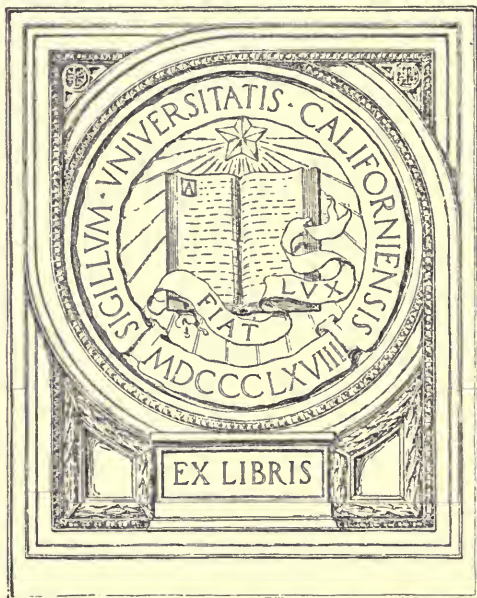
17

81
Parliament

4/6

W.R

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



EX LIBRIS

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

*Parliament 1.1.12
H. C. C.
H. C. C.*

*Res from Lillian
Xmas 1912*

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

BY
WILLIAM JEANS
(OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE)
BARRISTER-AT-LAW

LONDON
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD.
1912

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED BY THE
MIDDLESEX PRESS LTD.

LONDON



RICHARD CLAY & SONS LIMITED,
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E.
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

ALBIONIA 70. VIBU
23.13.01A 20.17A
V8.08.11

2637

DA
560
J34p

PREFACE

THE writer of these reminiscences was engaged altogether for forty-five years in the Press gallery at Westminster. He first entered it in 1863 and was there, with the exception of three years, till Midsummer last year. For over forty years of that period he wrote for a leading provincial journal an account of the proceedings in Parliament. He went to Melbourne at the end of 1865 and was absent for three years, and this explains why there is no reference in this volume to the events of the sessions of 1866-7-8. He returned to the Press gallery in 1869. These reminiscences are not intended to be a parliamentary history of the period which they cover. They touch on topics so trivial as the visit of the Shah to the House of Commons, and so grave as the fierce and prolonged conflict which raged between Mr. Gladstone's second Government and the Irish Nationalists from 1880 to 1885. In that struggle Mr. Gladstone showed himself to be a strong and masterful minister, and to its incidents—many of which were of a very dramatic character—he has devoted considerable attention, because he believes that they had almost as much to do with Mr. Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule as the presence of over eighty Irish Nationalists in the House of Commons. But, though not professing to be a history, these recollections touch on nearly every measure or matter of importance in the sessions with which they deal. For the present he has not carried them beyond the year 1886.

The writer holds Liberal opinions in politics. He has looked at and described events in Parliament from the Liberal point of view, but he trusts that it will be found that he has been neither unjust nor offensive to members of other parties in the State.

March 1912.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I 1863	1
II 1864	14
III 1865	21
IV 1869	26
V 1870	33
VI 1871	38
VII 1872	47
VIII 1872	51
IX 1873	57
X 1874	69
XI 1875	82
XII 1876	96
XIII 1877	107
XIV 1878	117
XV 1879	132
XVI 1880	147
XVII 1881	165
XVIII 1882	194
XIX 1882 (<i>continued</i>)	206
XX 1883	225
XXI 1884	244
XXII 1885	270
XXIII 1886	285
INDEX	321

Parliamentary Reminiscences

CHAPTER I

1863

WHEN I entered the Press gallery at the opening of the session of 1863 domestic politics were in a singularly placid condition. In the later years of Lord Palmerston's Government the great controversies which divided the two parties in the State were allowed to slumber. The Prime Minister himself was essentially conservative in his ideas, and though Mr. Gladstone was his chief lieutenant he never seriously attempted to disturb this period of political repose. Both parties were for the time content. The Liberals were in office, and enjoyed all its advantages. The Conservatives were in opposition, but they had the satisfaction of seeing that in home affairs a policy in the main satisfactory to them was pursued. So long as the Liberals were asleep or inactive Mr. Disraeli and his friends had no reason to enter into conflict with the ministry of the day. Even the Irish question was in a state of quiescence; and not long before Mr. Horsman had resigned the office of Chief Secretary because he could find nothing to do. This is a grievance from which none of his recent successors have suffered. The social problems which now so much trouble Parliament and the public were either non-existent or were ignored. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* was still predominant, and only a few men of the type of Maurice

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and Kingsley concerned themselves with social questions. Statesmen on both sides frequently made declarations with regard to the functions of the State which if uttered now would sentence them to exclusion from office and make it difficult for them to obtain or retain a seat in Parliament. I don't think that from 1863 to 1865 there was what is called a full-dress debate on any great question of domestic interest. Sometimes there was a small outbreak among the Radicals, but it never came to anything. Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright sat below the gangway, and were more or less exasperated with the Conservative policy of the Government. I thought, however, that their great aim at that time was to prevent this country from recognising the South, and so risking a war with the United States. In this policy they were fortunately aided by Mr. Disraeli, who in spite of considerable pressure from his party never said a word in favour of recognising the Southern Confederacy. The American Civil War and the war of the Danish duchies were the subjects that mainly agitated the country and the House of Commons in those years. On questions arising out of these conflicts there were some debates of great interest. Indeed, foreign affairs and foreign affairs alone gave much fillip and animation to the proceedings of Parliament in the last three years of Lord Palmerston's Government. So far as domestic affairs were concerned the country was living in a parliamentary paradise, which it has not seen since and is never likely to see again.

Of the men who were then in the House three only, so far as I know, survive at the time I am writing. One is the venerable Earl of Wemyss, who still retains his old individualism and some of his old controversial vigour; another is Lord St. Aldwyn, who entered the House of Commons in 1864; and the third is Lord Eversley, whom I

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

remember as a somewhat lively and frisky Radical below the gangway, giving an occasional spur to the sluggish administration of Lord Palmerston. Counts-out were not infrequent. Tuesday and Friday were then private members' nights, and several times in the session members who were attempting to bring questions before the House found their eloquence prematurely cut short by the discovery that forty members were not present. Mr. Thomas Collins, a member of that and the two succeeding Parliaments, devoted himself to the task of counting out the House whenever he saw the chance. From this he acquired the title of "Count Collins." He, like Sir F. Banbury in the present Parliament, was hostile to almost all legislation. He seemed to hold the opinion that the House of Commons was most usefully engaged when it was not sitting. Friday is now the day for private members' Bills, and we know what a scramble there is at the opening of the session to get possession of one of these days. At that period Wednesday was the day for the Bills of unofficial members; but there was no competition for it at the opening of the session, and sometimes the House rose early in the Wednesday afternoon simply because it had got no work to do.

In the 'sixties and even in the early 'seventies the questions were comparatively few. They very rarely exceeded a dozen, and if they rose to twenty the number was considered quite phenomenal. A member could then move the adjournment of the House without the support of forty members, and, when he wanted to obtain from a minister a fuller statement than he had got in answer to a question, he frequently exercised this power. As the years wore on the abuse of this privilege became so intolerable that it had to be withdrawn, and no one can now move the adjournment before the orders of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

day are entered upon unless he has the leave of the House or the support of forty members. In no circumstances probably could the right of moving the adjournment have been allowed to remain in the hands of a single member, but its abolition was greatly hastened by the action and policy of the Irish party.

Of the Prime Ministers whom I have seen in the House Lord Palmerston was the most constant and unflagging in his attendance. He generally sat with his hat on and his arms across his chest. Often he seemed to be asleep, but he was never caught napping. He was in his place when public business began, and he never almost left the House till it rose. When the Speaker retired to have his chop, which was as nearly at eight o'clock as possible, Lord Palmerston went out with him. For this meal the Speaker never took more than twenty or twenty-two minutes, and when he returned to the Chair Lord Palmerston almost immediately followed and remained till the adjournment. No doubt the duties of the premiership were lighter in those days than they are now, for, if they had not been, it would have been impossible for Lord Palmerston to have given so much attention to the business of the House. His majority was so small that on one occasion the Government only succeeded in defeating a motion for the reduction of the Navy Estimates by a majority of six. Notwithstanding the comparatively equal strength of parties the Government held its position with perfect security, and its authority did not seem to be weakened by a narrow escape from a defeat.

The great subject of interest in 1863 was the American Civil War, and with reference to it and especially to the recognition of the Southern States there were many questions and several debates. Some of the speeches made on these occasions afford a startling illustration

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the saying that prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error. Every one knows that Mr. Gladstone declared that Mr. Jefferson Davis had made a nation, but few people are aware that Mr. Disraeli in a debate on the Address in 1863 delivered a prophecy which turned out to be equally false. This was what he said—

“After the conclusion of the war we will see a different America from that which was known to our fathers and from that even of which this generation has had so much experience. It will, I believe, be an America of armies, it will be an America of diplomacy, it will be an America of rival States and of manœuvring Cabinets, of frequent turbulence and frequent wars.”

In 1865 Mr. Disraeli had learned to take a different and wiser view of the consequences of the American War. In his speech on the resolution passed by the House of Commons expressing sympathy with the Government and people of the United States on the death of President Lincoln, he expressed his fervent hope “that after these four awful years of trial the various corporations of North America would come out elevated and chastened, rich in that accumulated wisdom, and strong in that disciplined energy which a young nation could only acquire in a protracted and perilous struggle.”

The question of the recognition of the South was the subject of several questions in Parliament, and on June 30, 1863, Mr. Roebuck, an ardent supporter of the Southern Confederacy, brought forward a proposal in favour of its recognition. Mr. Roebuck always gave himself great licence of language. He had described himself once as “Tear ’em,” the farmer’s watch-dog who barked when his ricks were on fire. Mr. Roebuck assumed the character of the national watch-dog, and he often barked with patriotic fury. On this occasion he described the United States as “the bully of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

world," and asserted that if France and England recognised the South there would be an end of the war. He and Mr. Lindsay, another member of the House, had been to Paris. They had seen the Emperor, and the French ruler gave Mr. Roebuck authority to state in Parliament that the rumour that he was against recognising the South was untrue, and that he had sent instructions to his ambassador to deny it. "Nay, more," the Emperor, according to Mr. Roebuck, proceeded, "I instructed him to say that my feeling was not indeed exactly the same as it was, because it was stronger than ever in favour of recognising the South. I told him (the ambassador) to ask the British Government whether they would be willing to join me in that recognition." Mr. Roebuck declared that the cry about slavery was cant and hypocrisy. Mr. Bright turned the tables on the member for Sheffield with damaging effect. Politicians have short memories, and Mr. Roebuck was particularly forgetful of his previous escapades. Mr. Bright reminded him first that he had recently described the people of the South as gentlemen, and the people of the North as the scum and refuse of the earth. Mr. Roebuck explained that it was only to the army that he had applied this elegant phrase. It so happened that Mr. Roebuck had a few years before given his opinion of the Emperor of the French with more than his usual frankness and ferocity of language. We had, he said, nothing to look for from the Emperor of the French but animosity and bad faith. Mr. Roebuck had been at Cherbourg when the Queen and the Prince Consort visited France. It is the habit of royalties when they meet to kiss, and after he came back to this country Mr. Roebuck made a speech in which he said that there he saw "the Emperor's perjured lips touch the hallowed cheek of the Queen." This language, which lost none of

6.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

its effect when redelivered by Mr. Bright, placed Mr. Roebuck in a very unhappy and uncomfortable position. The member for Birmingham treated the amateur diplomacy of the member for Sheffield in a vein of lofty sarcasm. The Emperor of the French, he said, was too much represented in that House. They had got two envoys—Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Lindsay—he would not call them extraordinary but most extraordinary, a stroke which told with great effect. Then they had Mr. Pope Hennessy, who had also seen the French ruler, and he was whispering that the Emperor was ready to make a spring at Russia for the sake of Poland, and that he only wanted a word from the Prime Minister of England. Mr. Bright went on to say that if the South were recognised it would create an everlasting breach between the English people and the people of the United States, and that it would throw the weight of this country into the scale in favour of slavery. Mr. Layard, who was then the representative of the Foreign Office in the Commons, stated that no such communication as Mr. Roebuck had referred to had been received from the French Government. It was in one of these discussions on the American Civil War that Mr. Cobden, referring to the attitude of great numbers of people in this country towards the South, used one of his trenchant and forcible phrases: "We sympathise," he said, "with everybody's rebels but our own."

In those days the question of national expenditure was much discussed. The estimates were modest compared with what they are now, but they were criticised and that not from one side only. One old Conservative member, Sir H. Willoughby, had many controversies with Mr. Gladstone both on questions of taxation and expenditure. He thought the country was on the verge of ruin when the expenditure was between sixty and

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

seventy millions. Mr. Cobden, in the early 'sixties, was the great advocate of economy. In a debate on the Naval Estimates in 1863 he said, "I have been in this House twenty-two years, and I have never known an estimate altered after it had once been brought in. The late Mr. Hume told me that for forty-eight years he had never known estimates altered after they had been brought forward; but, mind you, when we refused the income tax, as we did in 1848, the Government took back the estimates and reduced them enormously." On another occasion I heard Mr. Cobden say that the only way to promote economy was to allow the Government of the day so much a year—I think he put it at the moderate figure of sixty millions—and tell them that for that sum they must carry on the affairs of the country. There was, however, a marked difference between the discussion of the estimates in those times and now. However ineffective the debates on Supply may have been they were really directed to the diminution of the estimates in the interests of the taxpayers. Though reductions of the votes were hardly ever carried the criticisms of members were probably not without influence on ministers and officials in the preparation of the estimates. Now, however, they are discussed not for the benefit of the taxpayer but with reference to rival policies of expenditure. One party desires the money to be spent on the Navy or the Army, another on measures of social reform, another on harbours or afforestation, but no one thinks of the pocket of the taxpayer. A new party has now arisen in Parliament whose great object is to promote expenditure. I refer, of course, to the Labour party. Their general policy includes many projects which whether good or bad would entail profuse demands on the public exchequer. In the 'sixties and 'seventies there was a good deal of detailed criticism

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the estimates. I remember one gentleman, Mr. W. Williams, one of the members for the old undivided borough of Lambeth, who devoted himself with great zeal, if not always with great intelligence, to this work. He aspired to be the Joseph Hume of the day. He was a well-known butt of *Punch*, in which he was always described as "Wiscount Williams." The story went that Mr. Williams, in a fit of economic enthusiasm, had said that even if the Government offered to make him a "Wiscount" he would decline the honour and would do his duty by the estimates. Discussions of Supply were frequently driven off till the end of the session, and I have seen in August between forty or fifty votes passed in one night. Mr. Balfour's method of fixing a weekly day for Supply has at least had the advantage of securing the discussion of the votes for the more important of the great departments of the State.

Even in this peaceful Palmerstonian Parliament there were occasional outbreaks. One of the most exciting scenes that I ever witnessed in the House of Commons occurred on July 2, 1863. I heard Sir S. Northcote, Mr. Lowe, Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone successively silenced by an angry and determined House. The question which aroused so much feeling was a comparatively small one. It was only the vote for the purchase of the Exhibition building of 1861. Somehow the idea had got abroad that the proposal partook of the character of what was then called a Court job; but the opposition to the vote was based chiefly on the ground that the building itself was hideously ugly. Mr. Gladstone—then Chancellor of the Exchequer—explained and defended the vote in a speech of considerable length. He was obliged to admit that the Exhibition building as it stood was not very good, but he gave the opinion that it was capable of being so embellished on the exterior

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

surface as to make it very handsome. This statement was received with laughter and incredulity. The opposition to the vote was led by Lord Elcho—the present Earl of Wemyss—who then as now was a very independent politician and sometimes attacked one party and sometimes the other. He quoted the opinion of Prosper Mérimée that the Exhibition structure had the pretensions of a monumental building without even the merit of being a commodious shed. It soon became evident that whatever the two front benches might say or do the opinion of the great majority of the House was against the vote. Sir S. Northcote endeavoured by a friendly manœuvre to extricate the Government from their difficulties. He had recourse to the usual resource of politicians in distress, and suggested that the matter might be the subject of inquiry by a Committee. This idea roused the furious hostility of members, and they expressed their opinion on it by refusing to hear Sir S. Northcote. He was assailed with cries of “Divide” from all parts of the House, and finding it impossible to proceed he endeavoured to checkmate his assailants by threatening to move to report progress. Then Mr. Lowe, who as Vice-President of the Council was officially responsible for affairs at South Kensington, rose with the object of making a statement in defence of the vote. His appearance was the signal for an outbreak almost as stormy as I have seen or heard in the House of Commons. He was met by loud and determined cries of “Divide” from the benches on both sides. The clamour was worse than when Mr. Asquith attempted to explain and defend the advice which he had given to the sovereign with regard to the use of the prerogative for carrying the Parliament Bill. The cries which greeted the Liberal leader came from a small group of members; but in the case of Mr. Lowe the shouts of “Divide”

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

rose from the large body of gentlemen on both sides. They were not acting under the influence of passion. They were simply determined not to hear another word in defence of the vote. Mr. Lowe had finally to retire before the storm, but as the *Times* reporter wrote at the time the scene of uproar and confusion was almost unexampled in parliamentary experience. Mr. Disraeli rose under the belief that he would be able to calm the excited and stormy assembly. He endeavoured to play the part of Pacificator, but he encountered the same sort of reception as Mr. Lowe. Loud cries of "Divide" arose, and the remarkable thing was that they came from his own supporters quite as much as from the occupants of the ministerial benches. After vainly struggling with the House for a minute or two he gave up the effort. Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards the Marquis of Salisbury, appealed to the House to behave in a more orderly manner, and Mr. Disraeli again rising attempted to address the House. He was allowed to utter a few sentences, and then the storm broke out again. He was heard to give an approval to the suggestion of a Select Committee, but this mode of shelving the question seemed to deepen and intensify the opposition to the vote, and amidst the incessant cries of "Divide" Mr. Disraeli resumed his seat. Mr. Henley, one of the most respected and independent of the Conservative leaders, was a man of shrewd judgment and racy tongue, and as he spoke in opposition to the vote he at once obtained the attention of the House. He denounced the proposal in unmeasured terms. He compared the attempt to beautify the Exhibition building to the showman who was going about the country exhibiting a black woman. "I can make her red," said the showman, "I can make her white, but do what I will I cannot make a handsome woman of her." This story exactly hit off the situation, and it was received

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

by the crowded House with uproarious delight. Mr. Gladstone made a last effort to save the position. The House, however, had made up its mind. He was allowed to explain one or two points, but he could not proceed with the defence of the vote, and he sat down in the midst of an unfinished sentence. The vote was rejected by 287 to 121—an enormous majority in view of the fact that it was supported by both front benches.

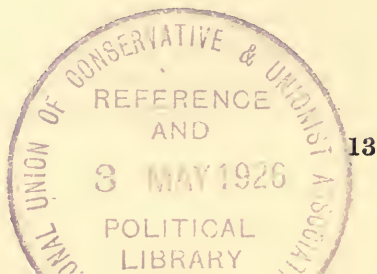
The action of the House on this occasion might seem to give some justification for the treatment of Mr. Asquith in July last year. The two cases are essentially different. In 1863 the House had discussed the vote for building South Kensington for some time. The arguments for it and against it had been fully stated, and the revolt of the members against any further speeches was due to the fact that they had made up their minds how to vote. They wanted to hear no more on the subject. It was a rude and boisterous form of closure, for the only way at that time of bringing debates to a close was by clamour and noise. I have seen the same form of closure exercised scores of times between midnight and two or three in the morning, when the House wanted to divide and go home and one or two members desired to inflict more speeches on it. Mr. Asquith's case stood on an altogether different footing. It was the refusal not of the House generally but of a small minority on one side of it to hear the first minister of the Crown in explanation and defence of a great act of policy. If the conduct of Mr. Asquith's assailants were generally acted on, it would put an end to all debate and indeed to the only method of carrying on Government by free speech.

In these years Mr. Roebuck was a conspicuous figure in the Commons. He had left the Radicals, but could hardly be said to have joined the Tories. He had an alert, keen and rather intellectual face. His style of

12

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

speech was terse and racy. He had no taste for rhetoric, but delivered his views in short, sharp, crisp sentences full of fire and point. He could say the bitterest things in a soft and rather silken voice; and he had the merit of never being commonplace. Whether you agreed with him or not you found him always fresh and interesting. I remember once going into a Committee-room where a private Bill was under consideration. Mr. Roebuck was Chairman of the Committee, and the Bill before it embodied an engineering scheme of a great and difficult character. The witness under examination was giving evidence against the Bill, and he swore that as an engineering project it was quite impracticable. Mr. Roebuck turned to the witness and said, "Do you know that some one proved that it was quite impossible for a steam-boat to cross the Atlantic, but just as he completed his demonstration the steam-boat came in?" The counsel did not like this way of treating and discrediting his witness, and there was a sharp encounter between him and the Chairman of the Committee. Though Mr. Roebuck became in later years a "lapsed Liberal" it should be remembered that so early as 1835 he put forward a scheme for dealing with the House of Lords substantially the same as that contained in the Parliament Act. Mr. Roebuck's scheme was a little more drastic. He proposed to give the Lords only a suspensory veto for one year, and that a Bill should become law over the heads of the Peers after it had been passed a second time by the House of Commons.



CHAPTER II

1864

ONE of the angriest scenes which I witnessed in the session of 1864 was the attack on Mr. Stansfeld on account of his relations with Mazzini, who was believed by some people to be implicated in conspiracies against the French Emperor. Letters were sent to Mr. Stansfeld's house in the name of Mr. Flower, or Fuori, which were believed to be intended for Greco, who had been tried for taking part in a plot to assassinate the Emperor. Mr. Stansfeld denied that he had ever had any communication directly or indirectly with Greco, but he admitted that letters addressed to Mazzini had been sent to his house under the name among others of "Fiore." Mr. P. A. Taylor, a well-known Radical in those days, stated that for many years he had placed his address at the disposal of Mazzini. He had the greatest respect, esteem and affection for Mazzini, and described the attacks made on him as the scandalous tittle-tattle of the police-courts of Paris. Mr. Taylor, however, was a private member, and Mr. Stansfeld was Civil Lord of the Admiralty. Mr. Disraeli fastened with great warmth on Mr. Stansfeld's admission that he had allowed letters for Mazzini to be addressed to his house. Did he deny, asked the Conservative leader, that his house in Thurloe Square was the medium of communication between Mazzini and his correspondents? "What correspondents?" asked Mr. Stansfeld. "What correspondents?" replied Mr. Disraeli, striking a dramatic attitude and

14

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

speaking with considerable passion. "You know them better than I do. Why, the assassins of Europe. What correspondents? asks the member for Halifax. Why, the advocates of anarchy throughout the Continent. What correspondents? asks the hon. member. Why, the men who point their poniards at the breast of our allies." After this outburst Mr. Washington Wilkes, then a leader-writer on the *Morning Star*, who was sitting beside me, said, "I will never say a good word for the fellow again." Lord Palmerston defended Mr. Stansfeld, though not perhaps with much zeal and spirit. Mr. Bright came to his aid in a speech of considerable fervour. "I need not say," he observed, "that I am no partisan of the present Government, and that I have never since a short time after its formation looked forward with dismay to its dissolution, but if I were as hungry as the hungriest person to place myself on that (the Treasury) bench, I would be ashamed to make my way to it over the character, the reputation, the happiness and the future of the youngest and last-appointed member of that Government." The Opposition were, however, too strong for Mr. Stansfeld, and he had to resign his place in the Government.

Mr. Stansfeld was not the only member of the Government who was in this year driven out of office owing to the action of the Opposition. Mr. Lowe, then Vice-President of the Council, shared the same fate. He was charged with mutilating the reports of the inspectors of schools, and the attack was led by Lord Robert Cecil, who brought forward a motion censuring the omission from the inspectors' reports of statements and opinions adverse to the views of the Government. He held that this was a breach of the conditions on which the inspectors were appointed. It appeared that in those days the inspectors were rather free in their expressions

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of opinion, and an order was issued from the department requiring them to confine their reports to the state of the schools on which they reported, and practical suggestions for their improvement. If the instructions of the department were not complied with the documents were not to be printed at the public expense. Mr. Lowe denied that he had cut out the passages in the reports to which the motion referred. The documents were, however, returned to the inspectors for revision when they contained opinions which had no relation to the schools with which they were dealing. The action of the department seemed reasonable enough; but the denominationalists were suspicious of the policy of the Education minister. The vote of censure was carried by a majority of eight, and the Vice-President of the Council had to resign. A Select Committee was subsequently appointed to investigate Lord Robert Cecil's charges, and it exonerated Mr. Lowe from any blame in the matter.

The war of the Danish duchies formed the subject of several discussions in the session of 1864. In one of these Mr. Disraeli, referring to Lord Palmerston's vigour and activity, said that "panting time toils after him in vain!" Mr. Bernal Osborne described the policy of the noble lord as paternal and stationary, and his Cabinet as a museum of curiosities. It was, he said, only to the measures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Gladstone, that the Government owed the little popularity and support that they enjoyed, and Mr. Milner Gibson, who had been put into the Cabinet as the representative of Radicalism, had become indolent if not quarrelsome. Mr. Bernal Osborne was one of the most amusing and lively speakers in this and the next Parliament. He had a considerable fund of humour, and he struck out with little regard to the interests of his own

16

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

political friends. He could keep the House in roars of laughter, but his amusing sallies never did the Government or any one else much harm. He was a lively though not a very serious politician, and the House always listened to one who diverted it with quips and strokes of rough if not very brilliant humour. He had at one time held a subordinate post in the Government, and so been reduced to comparative silence. When he was no longer in office it was, I think, Mr. Disraeli who described his first speech as the "wild shriek of recovered liberty."

When it became certain that the British Government would not interfere between the German Powers and their Danish prey, the Opposition proposed a formal vote of censure on ministers, and it led to a debate which extended over four days. The speeches delivered on that occasion are now of little interest, but one or two incidents may be described. Mr. Roebuck spoke with even more than his usual truculence. He described Prussia as a compound of "a pedagogue, of a drill-sergeant and of a highwayman." Of Lord Russell, who was then Foreign Secretary, he said that nature intended him for a schoolmaster and fortune had made him a statesman. The great object of the noble lord seemed to be to read lectures to all Europe, and Europe said "we don't intend to be lectured by you." Mr. Cobden, too, was severe on the conduct of the Government, whose members had used language which might lead Denmark to expect material assistance. The proceedings of ministers, he declared, had proved the futility of our foreign policy and the break-down of our diplomacy. It was in the course of the debate that an interesting point of parliamentary manners arose. Mr. Gathorne Hardy, afterwards the first Earl of Cranbrook, charged Mr. Layard, then Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, with making

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

“a calumnious statement.” The honourable gentleman at once rose and moved that the words be taken down, but the Speaker said that he saw nothing calling for interference. Lord Palmerston came to the aid of his subordinate, and contended that to charge a member with making a calumnious statement implied that he intended to distort the truth. Mr. Hardy, however, did not retract his language. Later in the night on the motion for adjournment of the debate—and on this motion in those days members could talk on anything—Mr. Pope Hennessy, afterwards Sir J. Pope Hennessy, read a quotation from a speech of Lord Palmerston made in 1855, in which he charged Mr. Layard, the object of Mr. Hardy’s rhetoric, with making “false and calumnious statements.” On that occasion the noble lord had at least gone one word worse than Mr. Hardy on the present occasion. Mr. Hennessy had fairly turned the tables on Lord Palmerston, and he wisely said no more on the matter. Curiously enough, almost the same question rose in the course of one of the exciting nights in the session of 1881. Colonel Tottenham had asked whether a murder in a certain district in Ireland was due to the action of the Land League. Mr. T. P. O’Connor raised a point of order, and inquired whether the gallant member was entitled to put expressions of opinion into a question, and charged him with “mendaciously” attributing to the Land League responsibility for the murder. The word “mendaciously” was at once taken objection to, the Speaker ruled it out of order, and Mr. T. P. O’Connor withdrew the offending word. Mr. O’Kelly then asked whether there was to be any protection against statements that were calumnious and lying, and the Speaker regarding this language as a defiant repetition of Mr. O’Connor’s offence named Mr. O’Kelly, who was of course suspended. Mr. McCarthy

18

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

asked whether the words "calumnious and mendacious" had not been used by Lord Palmerston, and upheld by the Chair. The Speaker explained that Mr. O'Kelly had been suspended for using the word "lying." Mr. O'Connor had been ordered to withdraw "mendacious," and the Speaker of that day apparently regarded both as lying outside the limits of parliamentary order. It thus appears that while "false" is parliamentary, "lying" and "mendacious" are not.

In the 'sixties and 'seventies members were more tolerant of strong words than they are now. I remember that Mr. Grant Duff once used language with regard to Sir Charles Wood, then Secretary for India, of an extremely personal character. Sir Charles Wood was, I may say, the worst speaker that ever sat on the Treasury bench, and that is saying a good deal. His utterance was sometimes barely articulate, and his sentences never had any grammatical existence. They began in confusion and ended in chaos. In case this language should appear to be exaggerated, I may state that in a work entitled *Political Biographies*, written by Mr. Frank Hill, then the editor of the *Daily News*, it was said that Sir Charles Wood's eloquence "resembles nothing so much as the sounds with which a lively deaf mute accompanies his finger-talk." It was possible to grasp at his meaning, but it may well be imagined that from such a speaker an Indian budget speech would be disjointed, rambling and incoherent. Sir Charles Wood's statement on Indian Finance in 1864 apparently exasperated Mr. Grant Duff, afterwards Sir E. M. Grant Duff, beyond endurance. He followed the Indian Secretary, and he began in these words—

"The speech which we have just heard—if it could be called a speech—was a sort of concatenation of broken interjectionary remarks, jerked out by a minister to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

whom Heaven has denied not only the power of lucid statement, but almost the gift of articulate speech." An attack of this kind on a minister would certainly be followed now by cries of "Order" and "Withdraw," but in those more robust and less sensitive days nothing happened. The Speaker did not interfere. There was a solitary cry of "Oh," and I remember that Lord Palmerston turned and gave Mr. Grant Duff one of those looks which a Prime Minister bestows on a mutinous or misbehaving supporter.

The most pregnant event of the session of 1864 was perhaps Mr. Gladstone's declaration on the Suffrage question. It was made on the second reading of Sir E. Baines' Borough Franchise Bill, in a comparatively thin House on a Wednesday afternoon, and in these terms: "Every one who is not incapacitated by some consideration of personal fitness or of political danger, is morally entitled to come within the pale of the constitution." This was accepted at the time as a declaration in favour of household, if not universal, suffrage; but like all Mr. Gladstone's statements of broad principle it was skilfully qualified, for the phrase about political danger might be used to support almost any restriction of the suffrage. The statement, nevertheless, was a shadow of things to come.

CHAPTER III

1865

I HAVE referred to the fact that very few conflicts took place in the later years of this Parliament on domestic politics. On one occasion, however, it seemed as if Mr. Disraeli were about to challenge the Government. Motions of censure were then given notice of publicly in the House, instead of being handed about as now to the representatives of the newspapers in the lobby. On one occasion in 1865, when the notices of motion were reached, the Speaker called on Mr. Disraeli. Every one expected that something was coming, and the House fell into an attitude of hushed expectation as it does when the leader of the Opposition rises after questions. The notice which Mr. Disraeli gave was to the effect, that in Committee of Supply he would call attention to the action of the Local Government Board in regard to a workhouse master who had been too familiar with a servant-maid. The House burst into roars of laughter, not over the misfortunes of the domestic, but at the character of the notice. Rarely has expectation so suddenly aroused been followed by so swift a collapse. Mr. Disraeli himself in giving the notice maintained the utmost gravity, but he seemed rather to enjoy the disappointment and amusement with which it was received.

The session of 1865 was comparatively peaceful. The Parliament was drawing to a close, and the Opposition recognised that it was no use attempting to dislodge

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Lord Palmerston's Government. The American Civil War was now near its end, and it was universally recognised that the South was hopelessly beaten. No more proposals were made for the recognition of the Confederacy ; and no other foreign question of moment disturbed the peace of Parliament. So quiet was the political atmosphere that neither the leader of the Opposition nor the Prime Minister spoke in the debate on the Address at the opening of the session.

On March 28 Mr. Dillwyn raised a debate on the Irish Church. He asked the House to declare that the present position of the Irish Church was unsatisfactory and called for the early attention of the Government. Mr. Gladstone's speech on that occasion gave a clear warning to that institution of what was coming. It is true that it was rather vague in its language. He did not in so many words declare for Disestablishment, but he acknowledged that the Irish Church was not in a satisfactory position. Any more specific statement would not have been tolerated by the Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone sailed as close to the wind as possible, and to those who had ears to hear the meaning of his declaration was very plain.

Mr. Cobden died on April 2. He lived long enough to know that the Civil War in America had ended in the defeat of the South. Richmond, in fact, fell on the day that he died, and this event was speedily followed by the collapse of the Southern Rebellion. Parliament was sitting at the time, and it was impossible that the disappearance of so great a figure from politics could pass unnoticed. On the first meeting of the House after Cobden's death Lord Palmerston paid a tribute to the man who had so often criticised and challenged his foreign policy. The speech was commonplace in character, and did not err on the side of magnanimity.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Disraeli rose to a much higher level. He said that without doubt Cobden was the greatest political character whom the pure middle class of this country had produced—rather a remarkable statement in view of the fact that Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone sprung directly from the pure middle classes. These great men, he went on to say, “are not altogether lost to us. Their opinions will be often quoted, their authority appealed to, and their judgments tested; even their very words will form part of our discussions and debates. There are some members of Parliament who, though not present in the body, are still members of this House, independent of dissolutions, of the caprice of constituencies and even of the course of time. Mr. Cobden is one of these men.” Mr. Bright’s tribute was pathetic in its simplicity and tenderness. Shading his eyes to conceal his emotion he said, “I did not know how much I loved him till I had lost him.”

When John Stuart Mill stood for the old undivided City of Westminster in 1865 I was present at several of his meetings. He had some very awkward questions to answer. He was asked why he had described the upper classes as occasional liars and the lower classes as habitual liars. Mr. Mill admitted quite frankly that he had used the words. He thought as he had written, and so did the most intelligent of the working classes themselves, and the passage applied mainly to those who were uneducated and subjected to the power of others. If they were educated and became free citizens he should not be afraid of them, for lying was the vice of slaves. He added that the working classes were ashamed of lying, which was more than he could say of the same class in any other nation which he knew. Even with these qualifications it required some courage to defend the proposition that the working classes were

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

habitual liars. Then he was asked why he had said that the working classes had no right to have large families. Mill said he had never denied the right; but he saw no hope of raising wages except by moral resolution on the part of the working classes not to overstock the labour market. When Mr. Mill stood for the old undivided city of Westminster, which returned two members, the other candidates were Captain Grosvenor, a Liberal, and Mr. W. H. Smith, a Conservative. The hustings were erected near Covent Garden—for this was before the days of the ballot—and each of the candidates had to be proposed and seconded. Captain Grosvenor and Mr. Mill were both standing as Liberals, though not in association, and I recollect the curious and slightly disdainful look which the handsome guardsman cast on the Radical philosopher. Captain Grosvenor began his speech in the then customary form, “free and independent electors”; Mr. Mill, evidently doubted whether they could be so described, for he simply addressed them as “gentlemen.” Very little could be heard of the speeches of either of the candidates. Captain Grosvenor and Mr. Mill were elected by large majorities, but after the franchise was extended in 1867 the first use which the household voter in Westminster made of it was to turn the philosopher and thinker about his business, and to elect Mr. W. H. Smith in his place.

When Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister the gentleman who put him most often to the question was Mr. Darby Griffith. Compared with more recent experience his performances in that direction would be regarded as trifling, but he pretty frequently questioned Lord Palmerston, especially on foreign affairs, and also very often addressed the House. He was a bore of the first water; but his name is connected with one considerable change in the government of the country. One of

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the curiosities of the British Constitution was, that if the Postmaster-General was to be in Parliament at all, he must sit in the House of Lords. This was not indeed because the office was limited to peers, but because, under the Act constituting the office, it was provided that whoever was appointed to it should not be qualified to be elected to a seat in the House of Commons. The consequence was that the office of Postmaster-General was almost always conferred on a peer; though in Mr. Canning's short administration it was held by a commoner, who of course had no seat in the House of Commons. Mr. Darby Griffith carried a Bill removing the disqualification of the original Act, and opening the office to members of the House of Commons.

The customs of members of the House of Commons in the matter of clothes have undergone considerable change since the Parliament whose proceedings I first witnessed. Tall hats were universal, and billycocks would have been regarded if not as vulgar, at least as eccentric. In the summer white hats were more common than now, and the costumes of members in the hotter months of the session lighter at least in colour than in recent years. Mr. Joseph Cowen if not the first member who wore a round felt hat was at least one of the earliest, and from his time the practice grew and has since become quite common. The Serjeant-at-arms in those days even kept an eye on the dress of the men who worked in the Press gallery. I recollect that when a colleague of mine came down in a rather loud check suit he received a message from the Serjeant-at-arms requesting him not to appear in it again. Some of the country gentlemen still dressed as was the custom of a generation before. Sir Brooks Bridges, who afterwards became Lord Fitzwalter, generally wore a blue swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons, and a buff waistcoat.

CHAPTER IV

1869

THE General Election of 1868 brought Mr. Gladstone into power with a majority of 114 or 115. His Government was a very strong one. Mr. Lowe was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. Bright President of the Board of Trade. The great work of the session of 1869 was the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church. The question had been settled by the constituencies, and every one knew that all resistance to the Irish Church Bill would be futile. In the debate on the second reading of the Bill there were many great speeches; but they did not affect the decision of Parliament or even seriously retard the progress of the Bill. Mr. Disraeli's speech against the Bill was by no means one of his highest efforts, but it contained one passage which, indeed, had no bearing on the question, but which always struck me as a very amusing piece of parliamentary raillery. His great argument against the measure was that it was confiscation, and that if they divided the property of the Church there was no reason why they should not divide the property of the landlord. This was the way in which he worked out the argument.

“Some Irish gentlemen have large estates and others have no estates at all. The latter would say, ‘We find ourselves in an anomalous position. Our breeding is not inferior to that of our habitual companions. Our

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

education is the same, our pursuits are similar. We meet on the same hunting-field, we drink the same claret, we stand opposite to each other in the same dance; and our feelings are hurt by some of our companions having estates of £6000, or £8000, or £10,000 a year with broad acres and extensive woods. We know well the spirit of the age—that the sentiment of selfishness is not to be tolerated. We do not ask for the estates of our more fortunate companions. All that we ask is that you will take their estates from them, and, as one of the great principles of Irish regeneration and social equality, let all Irish gentlemen, like the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, live on the voluntary contributions of their friends.’ ” I need not say that the picture of a body of Irish gentlemen, supported on the voluntary contributions of their friends, highly amused the House. It was one of those satiric touches with which Mr. Disraeli so often delighted his hearers.

The longest and momentarily the most effective speech against the Irish Church Bill was made by Mr. Gathorne Hardy. He was a strong Conservative and an ardent Churchman, and his religious and political feelings alike inspired him with intense hostility to the measure. Mr. Hardy was in some respects one of the greatest debaters that I have ever heard. He was always passionately in earnest. He spoke from deep conviction, and this gave all his utterances the stamp of sincerity and of a certain moral greatness. He had an unlimited command of language. He never hesitated for a word, and spoke with great fluency. When in the full tide of his eloquence it was like “a mighty rushing wind.” He seemed to carry everything before him. No man in that Parliament roused so easily the enthusiastic cheers of the Conservatives, and for the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

moment even his opponents felt impressed by the whirlwind of his rhetoric. The effect of his speeches was very evanescent. Delivered with fiery energy and with sweeping gesture, they seemed to make him the master of the field. When he sat down one thought that he had routed the enemy, but after the dust had cleared away it was found that little or no mischief had been done. In the cold and cheerless type of the morning papers his speeches lost half their effect and much of their charm. The fervour and power of the great debater had disappeared, and it was found that his arguments had comparatively little force, and that a great part of the speech was mere rhetoric. There probably never was a parliamentary orator whose speeches produced so much temporary and so little permanent effect. As I have stated, the Irish Church Bill aroused his strong and bitter opposition. He denounced it as a sacrilegious measure. It was wrong, he declared, in the sight of God and against the interests of his country. Opinions of this kind carried, I need not say, little weight in the first Gladstone Parliament, and Mr. Hardy's talk of sacrilege and spoliation did not affect the fate of the Bill. When the measure was in the House of Lords the Duke of Rutland of that day put the confiscation argument even more strongly. He called the Bill "robbery of God," but this view was disposed of by the then Bishop of St. Davids (Dr. Thirlwall, the historian of Greece), who spoke with calm and philosophic scorn of the idea that Church property had a specially sacred character. No material offerings are so acceptable to the Almighty, said the bishop, as those which are most beneficial to man. He mentioned a case of a gentleman (Sir Benjamin Guinness) building or restoring a cathedral in Dublin, or of a wealthy lady (Baroness

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Burdett-Coutts) building a public market. Each of these gifts he believed to be equally acceptable to God. The words sacrilege and robbery of God applied to this Bill were as irrelevant and misapplied as they were irritating and offensive.

Ministers in the present day must look back with envious regret to the time when bills like the Irish Church Bill went through all their stages in a comparatively short time. This measure only occupied ten days in Committee. I would not venture to predict how many sittings it would require in these times. No serious attempt was made to attack or destroy its principles in Committee. The passing of the second reading was accepted as deciding all questions of that character. Mr. Disraeli gave notice of many amendments in Committee, but only one, I think, really touched the question of principle. This was an amendment to omit the clause dissolving the union of the English and the Irish Churches, and even that did not affect the question of Disestablishment or Disendowment. The whole object of the proposals of the Conservative leader was to save as much of the property of the Irish Church as possible. His efforts in that direction were courageous to the verge of audacity. Mr. Gladstone said that if all the amendments of the leader of the Opposition had been accepted, the Bill would have left the Irish Church in possession of a somewhat larger mass of property than it then held.

At the third-reading stage of the Bill Mr. Disraeli attacked it with considerable warmth. He made a speech some passages of which will be delivered this year almost word for word by Sir Edward Carson. The policy of Mr. Gladstone tended to Civil War. The Papal power in Ireland would, said Mr. Disraeli, attempt

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

to obtain ascendancy and predominance. Was it natural that the Protestants of Ireland should submit to such a state of things without a struggle? You know, he said, they will not. Was England to interfere and again conquer Ireland? Was there to be another battle of the Boyne, another siege of Derry, and another treaty of Limerick? These things, said Mr. Disraeli, are not only possible but probable. How foolish all this rhetoric reads forty-two years after it was spoken, and how worthless the prophecies of the great Tory leader, and yet his successors will repeat these ideas if not these very words in the course of the debates on the Home Rule Bill. There was one rather striking incident in Mr. Gladstone's speech bringing to a close the debate on the third reading. He had spoken with confidence of the Bill becoming law. A murmur of dissent came from the Opposition. As sure, said Mr. Gladstone, pointing to the clock (it was then twelve minutes past two in the morning), as the hands on that clock are pointing towards the dawn so are rapidly flowing out the years, the months and the days that remain to the Irish Church Establishment. This sentence, delivered with all Mr. Gladstone's oratorical power and intensity, was followed by thundering cheers from his followers.

The House of Lords, mainly through the influence of the late Lord Salisbury, read the Bill a second time; but in Committee they made amendments which at one time threatened to lead to a conflict between the two Houses. The differences were, however, arranged, mainly through the exertions of the Archbishop of Canterbury acting on the suggestion of the Queen. Mr. Gladstone, in asking the Commons to accept the Bill with the amendments to which the Government had assented, paid a compliment to the Lords, which I am

30

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

surprised the supporters of that Assembly did not discover during the debates on the Parliament Bill. He spoke of "that comprehensive sagacity and forethought, that power of realising the future and preparing for it, which had led to the settlement which he urged the House to accept." At the last stage of the Bill some speeches of a congratulatory character were made in which much was said of the healing and reconciling effect of the Bill. On that occasion, Sir P. O'Brien, who talked often in those days and who had a great capacity for rambling speech, made one of the best bulls that I ever heard. The Irish Church Act, he said, would break down the bridge which had hitherto separated the Catholics and Protestants.

Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman (then Mr. Henry Campbell) was returned for the Stirling Burghs in the 1868 election, and his first important speech was made on the motion to go into Committee on the University Test Bill. He supported the abolition of test on the ground of the growing inefficiency of the present system of university teaching, and because his only hope of its amendment lay in the infusion of fresh blood. The universities, he said, gave a minimum of education at a maximum of expense; we used to hear the universities spoken of as places of sound learning and religious education. His complaint was that the education was not very sound and the religion not very learned. The House would not attach much importance to attendance at chapel, because that was a matter of discipline and often of penal discipline. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman then described the kind of religious examination to which the undergraduate was subjected. In the course of his residence he was examined in two or three of the Gospels, or in other parts of the Greek Testament;

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

but they were treated as pieces of classical literature and with no regard to dogmatic teaching. There was an examination in Paley's *Evidences*, but, as described by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, it was of a very mechanical character.

CHAPTER V

1870

THE great measures of the session of 1870 were the Irish Land Act and the English Education Act. The former has been superseded by subsequent measures. It was the first of a series of Acts for the settlement of the Irish land question; but it failed because, though it gave tenants some security against capricious eviction, it contained no provision against the raising of the rent and the eviction of the tenant if he could not or would not pay it. It was a very complicated Bill, and though the Irish landlords did not like it they did not offer it any very serious opposition. I remember that shortly after Mr. Gladstone made his speech introducing the Bill, the son of an Irish peer came out into the lobby and declared with great satisfaction that it might have been much worse. It occupied fifteen days in Committee, then considered a very unusual time for that stage of a Bill. I am afraid to think how long it would take now.

The other great measure of that year, the Education Act, was in charge of Mr. Forster, and it brought the Government into rather sharp collision with some of their Nonconformist supporters. It underwent many changes in Committee. Originally it proposed that where School Boards were established in towns they should be appointed by the town councils. An amendment by Sir Charles Dilke providing that School Boards should be elected by the ratepayers was rejected

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

by a majority of only five, and the Government in the end accepted the principle of direct election. The cumulative vote was not in the Bill when it was brought in. It was proposed by the late Lord F. Cavendish, and accepted with very little discussion and with a very imperfect appreciation of its actual operation. Sir W. Harcourt was against it, and said that he had no faith in these fantastic methods of attempting to govern England by anything but a majority.

In the discussions on the Education Bill a curious controversy arose on the ballot. That method of voting had not then been established at parliamentary elections, and a proposal to adopt it in the election of School Boards was furiously resisted by the Conservatives. It was denounced by Mr. Gathorne Hardy with much passion. He declared that the department entrusted with the education of the people in moral principles was inaugurating its work by a system of hypocrisy, treachery and baseness. They were educating the people in hypocrisy and fraud. The strength of this language must amuse those who read the debates, and ought to make them discount freely the extravagant rhetoric which we frequently hear both in Parliament and in the country. The Education Bill, a very large and complex measure, only occupied ten days in Committee. I well remember that the sitting on the last day of the Committee, on July 14, was a very long one, and that members and journalists emerged from Palace Yard at a quarter-past five in the morning to find facing them newspaper placards announcing that war between France and Germany was impending.

In the progress of the Education Bill the most interesting event was the conflict which arose between the Government and the representatives of militant Non-conformity. The quarrel reached its crowning phase in

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the debate on the third reading of the Bill. The Non-conformist members were very sore, and they seized the occasion to give the Government a bit of their mind. Mr. H. Richard charged ministers with having thrown the whole body of Nonconformists overboard, and told Mr. Forster that, mounted on the good steed "Conservative," he had charged into the ranks of his friends and ridden them down rough shod. Mr. Winterbotham, a young member of the House whose early death put an end to a promising career, asserted that the Government had treated with contempt a large and influential section of their supporters, who had to march through the valley of humiliation. Mr. Miall made a strong speech, in which he bluntly told Mr. Gladstone that he and his friends owed their position to Nonconformist support. They did think that some consideration should have been paid to their views, but "once hit twice shy," said Mr. Miall.

This attack drew a reply from Mr. Gladstone marked by its courage, firmness and independence. He was, indeed, indignant. I remember the restrained passion which ran through his answer to Mr. Miall and his friends; but the speech was free from all trace of temper or bitterness. It would be well if leaders of parties in these days adopted the same attitude of independence in dealing with grumbling or mutinous supporters. Referring to Mr. Miall's speech, he said that "support ceased to be valuable when it was accompanied by reproaches like these. I hope my hon. friend will not continue that support to the Government one moment longer than he thinks consistent with his sense of duty and right." Turning round to Mr. Miall, and speaking in tones of stern rebuke, he went on, "For God's sake, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause which he has at heart that he should do so.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

So long as my hon. friend gives us his support we will co-operate with him for every purpose we have in common, but when we think his opinions and demands exacting, when we think he looks too much to the section of the community which he adorns and too little to the interests of the people at large, we must then recollect that we are the Government of the Queen, and must endeavour to forget the part in the whole, and must, in the great measures we introduce into the House, propose to ourselves no meaner object than the welfare of the empire at large." The general body of Mr. Gladstone's supporters loudly cheered these observations, and Mr. Miall and his friends looked somewhat crestfallen. If Mr. Balfour had adopted at the outset this attitude in regard to political and fiscal sectaries in the Unionist party how much greater and stronger his position would have been. Liberal statesmen of the present time ought to speak to their followers in the same spirit, and with the same frankness, when they are making extreme and impracticable demands.

In the course of the discussion of Mr. Lowe's budget in this year, I heard the Speaker address the House not from the Chair but as a member of the House. There is no rule prohibiting the Speaker from taking part in the work of the Committee of the House; but Mr. Speaker Dennison was probably the last Speaker that will ever exercise this right. It was during the discussion in Committee of what was then called the Customs and Inland Revenue, now the Finance Bill. The Speaker, who represented a great agricultural constituency, spoke on some point connected with the taxation of horses engaged in agriculture. After leaving the Chair he had taken his seat on the front ministerial bench, and still wearing his wig and robes, he addressed members with reference to the question at

36

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

issue. Not only did he speak but he voted, and was one of a majority of four which inflicted a small defeat on the Government. In former times the Speaker often took part in discussions in Committee. For instance, in 1813 a Bill for Catholic emancipation was read a second time in the House of Commons, but it was wrecked in Committee through the action of the Speaker. Mr. Abbot, who then filled the Chair, carried amendments withholding from Catholics the right to sit and vote in Parliament, and this, of course, rendered the measure worthless. It is improbable that any one will ever hear again the Speaker address the House except from the Chair.

CHAPTER VI

1871

IN 1871 the chief measure of the session was the Bill for regulating the organisation of the Army and abolishing the system of purchasing commissions. It seems incredible now that a little more than forty years ago a commission in the Army could be bought as if it were an article of furniture, and that the proposal to abolish the system met with a keen and prolonged resistance. Mr. Cardwell, then the Secretary for War, in introducing the Bill declared that the trafficking in commissions in the glorious profession of arms ought to be abolished. He asked the House plainly whether it was the highest bidder who was to obtain a commission in the Army. Mr. Goschen described the Bill as a measure for taking "the Army out of pawn." In the course of the debates on the Army Regulation Bill, Sir George, then Mr. Trevelyan, moved a resolution aimed at the position of the then Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge. He made a strong speech on the subject; but in the lobby it was said that he did not deliver what would have been its most epigrammatic sentence. He intended to say, but did not say, that the Government, in the matter of Army reform, had abolished purchase to please the Radicals, had increased the expenditure to please the Tories, and had retained all the old abuses to please the Court.

It was on the Committee on the Army Regulation Bill that obstruction in its modern and more organised

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

form began. There had been occasionally resorts to this method of parliamentary resistance before; but these cases were rare and were generally limited to a night or so. In the case of the Army Bill the obstruction was pursued night after night by Lord Elcho, Mr. Baillie Cochrane, Sir James Elphinstone, Mr. Cavendish Bentinck and others. A scene of a very violent character took place one night on the motion for reporting progress. Mr. Baillie Cochrane—who was at one time a member of the Young England party—charged the Prime Minister with acting the part of a tyrant. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, one of the wilder and more reckless spirits of this Parliament, scattered about accusations of all kinds, and declared among other things that Mr. Gladstone's conduct was utterly unprincipled, a phrase which produced a tremendous uproar on the Liberal side of the House. Mr. Bentinck shook his fist at the roused and angry benches opposite, and amid the din he could be heard asking the Prime Minister to keep "his hounds" in order. He charged Mr. Arthur Peel, then a member of the Government and afterwards the Speaker, with taking part in these disorderly proceedings, and Mr. Peel admitted that when the hon. member charged Mr. Gladstone with utter want of principle he did express his strong disapprobation. Mr. Bentinck explained next day, with a frankness which greatly amused the House, that "so far as he could recollect" he did not use the word which provoked the remonstrance of Mr. Peel. The Opposition based their resistance to the Army Regulation Bill mainly on the ground that the Government had not produced their scheme of promotion and retirement. On one of the nights when the Committee was prolonged till nearly three in the morning, a member on the Liberal side, Sir Hedworth Williamson, I believe, said, in a voice that could be heard all over the House, to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Sir James Elphinstone, one of the obstructives, " Jamie, when will you allow us to go home ? " In the hope of daunting the obstructionists Mr. Gladstone announced on May 23 that no consideration of time would prevent the Government from proceeding with the Army Regulation Bill and the Ballot Bill; but in the end Mr. Cardwell had to give up several of the clauses in the Army Bill in order to get it through.

When the measure reached the Lords the Duke of Richmond moved, as an amendment on the second reading, a resolution declining to proceed with the Bill until a complete and comprehensive scheme of military reorganisation had been placed before Parliament. This resolution was carried by 155 to 130. Happily the Constitution in this case provided a short and easy way of dealing with the Lords. Mr. Gladstone pointed out in the Commons that the Peers had not rejected the Bill, and that it was open to any member of the Upper House to move its second reading. Purchase, he went on to say, existed by warrant, and the Government had advised Her Majesty to cancel the warrant by which it had been created. Her Majesty had accepted the advice, and a new warrant would be issued under which purchase would no longer be continued. In fact, he added, at the present moment purchase no longer existed. These announcements aroused the greatest enthusiasm among Mr. Gladstone's supporters, who regarded them as the first successful movement in the long campaign against the House of Lords. Mr. Disraeli denounced the course taken by the Government as high-handed and illegal. Mr. Gladstone had defied the opinion of Parliament and appealed to the prerogative of the Crown to get him out of the difficulties. The Lords, however, accepted the situation. They protested, but submitted. The Army Regulation Bill became law.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

If the Peers had declined to pass it the only result would have been not that purchase would have remained, but that the officers would have been deprived of the compensation which they were to receive on its abolition.

The great feature of the budget this year was the match tax, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lowe, proposed in the cheerful but utterly misplaced belief that it would be readily accepted by the House and the country. A little regulation of the match trade, he said, would be an advantage, and would not seriously injure it. He proposed a tax of a halfpenny on boxes of matches under 100, and of a penny on boxes over 100. He told the House that he expected to get £550,000 a year from this source of revenue. Delighted with his own cleverness he suggested that the stamps on the match-box should bear the motto "*ex luce lucellum*," from light a little gain. The tax excited great opposition. The girls engaged in the match trade marched to the House of Commons in their hundreds; and there was a slight, but only a slight, anticipation of the raids of the suffragettes. In the first division on the budget the Government majority fell to 27, and Mr. Gladstone had to announce that the match tax would be reconsidered. This was preliminary to its abandonment, and the only original feature in Mr. Lowe's finance disappeared a few days after it had been announced. Mr. Lowe did more than any other member of the ministry to weaken its position. His manner, perhaps in part due to defective eyesight, was brusque, and he was more or less in constant conflict with his colleagues. I think it was Mr. Ward Hunt who once asked whether it was true that Mr. Lowe and Mr. Ayrton were not on speaking terms, and carried on all their communications through the Prime Minister. In this session Mr. McCombie, the first tenant farmer to be returned for a Scotch con-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

stituency, said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was the most unpopular man in the country with the tenant farmers of Scotland. Mr. Lowe was a little too conscious of his own cleverness, and had but slight consideration for the feelings and prejudices of the ordinary member. Not only did he not suffer fools gladly, but he snubbed and criticised them unmercifully. His personal unpopularity with members was a great element of weakness in the Government, and helped to undermine its power.

It was in this session that Lord Hartington, then Chief Secretary, moved for a Committee to inquire into the state of the county of West Meath. The Government, he stated, desired that the Committee should be a secret one; but this was too much for the House of Commons. Members on both sides objected to the establishment of a Vehmgericht of this character, and the proposal to make it secret was abandoned. In the debate on this Bill Mr. Disraeli made a violent attack on the general policy of the Government, and uttered a sentence which furnished a text for many Tory addresses. They had, he said, legalised confiscation, consecrated sacrilege, endowed treason, and emptied the gaols and all to pacify Ireland. Mr. Bernal Osborne delivered a caustic speech on this occasion, and complained that there were few Irishmen in the Government. Over the portals of Downing Street were, he asserted, written the words, "No Irishman need apply." The Liberals cheered ironically, for every one knew that Mr. Osborne was rather sore that he had been left out of the ministry. There was, he went on to say, only one Irishman in the Cabinet, Mr. Chichester Fortescue, and he had been sent to the treadmill of the Board of Trade. Another Irishman, Mr. Monsell, had been made Postmaster-General, or, as the speaker phrased it, had been sent to the dead-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

letter office. Mr. Osborne, however, was no longer the sole jester of the House. He had a formidable rival in Mr. Serjeant Dowse (afterwards Baron Dowse), one of the Irish law officers. He told the House that Mr. Osborne would be very glad if the Prime Minister sentenced him to eighteen months' imprisonment at the Board of Trade. Mr. Osborne was at this time one of the members for Waterford, which then had two, and Mr. Dowse described him as an Irishman *pro re nata*. Some Irish constituencies were generous enough to afford a refuge for the destitute, and Mr. Osborne might be regarded as an Irishman till the next General Election. The Committee asked for by Lord Hartington was appointed, and its inquiries resulted in the passing of the Westmeath Act—a local Coercion Bill which had the effect of driving out of the disturbed district the two or three men who were terrorising it.

Sir John Pakington, afterwards Lord Hampton, was in this Parliament a frequent speaker from the front Opposition bench. He was dull, pompous and tedious, and constantly mistook platitudes for arguments. He was an excellent country gentleman of the quarter-sessions type; but it was difficult to discover how he ever became a Cabinet Minister. In all cabinets, however, there are members of whom it may be said in the words of Pope, "one wonders how the devil they got there." Sir John Pakington had a great sense of his own dignity and importance, and he was profoundly annoyed on one occasion when the House was counted out just as he was about to raise a question in which he was interested. The next day he called attention to the subject, and told the House, in a tone of outraged dignity, that a paper had been found on the floor with the awful words, "We want to count Pakington." A slip had been placed before Mr. Forster when

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

he was speaking on some matter connected with the Diseases of Animals Act. That gentleman tore it up and threw it on the floor, but some one had gathered and connected the fragments and brought them to Sir John. He was deeply offended that any member of the House should be so malevolent as to wish to "count Pakington," and he suggested that the paper had emanated from the ministerial bench. This was not so. It had indeed been handed by Mr. Goschen to Mr. Forster; but, sad to tell, the words on it were written by a member of Sir John's party. It was thus brought to his knowledge for the first time that his own friends regarded him as such an intolerable bore that they refused to listen to him. The Tory member who wrote "We want to count Pakington" gave it to the Liberal Whip, who handed it to Mr. Goschen, who passed it to Mr. Forster, who, as I have stated, tore it up and threw it on the floor. Mr. Thomas Collins, who would have counted out anybody and everybody, vindicated the practice of counting out as the only defence which the House had against the hobbies and crotchets of private members, but now-a-days the wildest or the most unpracticable proposals can generally command the support of forty members.

The Ballot Bill was first introduced in 1871, and Mr. Plunket, afterwards Lord Rathmore, foretold quite truly that it would bring in sixty or seventy Nationalists into the House. Everybody was a Unionist in those days, and Lord Hartington, who spoke for the Government, said, "Let them come. There is no use in crying peace when there is no peace; but when the Nationalists came they would find a strong and inalterable determination on the part of the English people to maintain unity of the empire." It was in one of the debates on the Ballot Bill that Mr. Bernal Osborne informed the House

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that in the city of Waterford, which he then represented, it was necessary to pay your audience. But though you got your audience you did not necessarily get a hearing, for after he had paid his money and obtained his audience the "ruffians," as he put it, would not listen to him. He mentioned that in his bill of expenses an item of £10 appeared for two sets of false teeth in consequence of the too zealous activity of some of his supporters.

When the University Tests Bill was in Committee in 1871 it was disposed of in half a sitting. Only one amendment was moved, the object of which was to make degrees in divinity open to men of all creeds. Mr. Gladstone would not have it, and asked what divinity could mean apart from a Church. Lord E. Fitzmaurice amused the House by a description of "clerical fellows." They consisted, he said, of two classes, one with white neckties and one without. The first class embraced the dull, conscientious, bigoted members of colleges, the men who opposed all reform, and the other consisted of men who took holy orders to get fellowships, and who, as soon as they got them, abandoned the white neckties and all the other signs of outward and spiritual grace. The Government, even with its majority of 114, were only able to defeat the proposal by a majority of 22.

Mr. Ayrton, the First Commissioner of Works, was an able man in his way, but he was a perfect Philistine. He was more or less continually in conflict with the "men of taste," and with members of artistic ideas. He greatly offended them by describing the renovated crypt of St. Stephens as a "bedizened vault." He called Mr. Beresford Hope the Chesterfield of the nineteenth century, a remark which wanted the delicate and refined sarcasm of Mr. Disraeli's allusion to the "Batavian grace" of the same honourable gentleman. Mr. Hope was of Dutch descent, with a short, stolid figure, more

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

suggestive of the captain of a Dutch lugger than the member for an English university. He was a vigorous and racy speaker, and he retorted on Mr. Ayrton by saying that our national monuments were presided over by a shopkeeper. The remark, however, had no point, for however insensible Mr. Ayrton may have been to artistic considerations he was a solicitor and not a shopkeeper. The First Commissioner of Works had a bitter quarrel with the late Sir Joseph Hooker, at that time the director of Kew Gardens. He was one of the greatest botanists of the century—the friend and associate of Darwin, but Mr. Ayrton in the words of a contemporary writer regarded him as a species of market gardener, who having, like the boy in Squeers' School, defined botany as a knowledge of plants, was employed as head gardener at Kew.

CHAPTER VII

1872

IN 1872 the practice of carrying the Address on one night, so soon to be ended, still prevailed, and on the first night of the session this business was easily disposed of, and the House rose at twenty minutes past eight. Soon after the opening of the session Mr. Dennison, the Speaker, retired, and went to the House of Lords with the title of Viscount Ossington. His successor was Mr. Brand, and Mr. Gladstone, in congratulating him on his election, set the office of Speaker on a higher pedestal than had ever been done before. He quoted Goldsmith—

“ Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm ;
Though round its base the gathering clouds may spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

The Speaker is a great dignitary, but probably no one but Mr. Gladstone would have had the courage to apply to his office these magnificent lines.

In this session the Government got into trouble over the appointment of Sir Robert Collier as a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Act reconstituting the Judicial Committee provides that a member of that body must have been a member of one of the superior courts at Westminster. Sir Robert Collier was Attorney-General, and did not, therefore, possess that qualification ; but the Government provided

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

it for him by making him a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He became a sort of phantom judge. Before he entered the Court of Common Pleas he was Attorney-General, and after he left it he became a member of the Judicial Committee. If I recollect aright he sat only on one or two days as a Judge of the High Court. Mr. Gladstone and the Lord Chancellor were denounced for having evaded the law, and a vote of censure on their conduct was proposed in the House of Lords. Lord Westbury attacked the appointment in a vein of stinging censure, and in that tone of polished contempt which he always exhibited towards Lord Hatherley, then the Lord Chancellor. The Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor, he said, had combined to effect a fraud on the statute law of the country. The late Lord Salisbury was the chief assailant, and the late Duke of Argyll the chief defender of the appointment of Sir Robert Collier, and their speeches were excellent examples of frank, plain-spoken parliamentary criticism. Quite unexpectedly the Government were saved from defeat by a majority of two. The success of the motion might have led to the resignation of the Lord Chancellor, and the Conservative leaders were unwilling to force matters to that point. So certain was it that the Government would be defeated that articles had been written in most of the newspaper offices on that assumption, and had to be altered at the last moment. In the *Standard*, however, the article appeared as it was originally written, and all London was laughing next morning when it found the Conservative organ expressing the hope that the country would endorse the verdict of the Lords—the verdict which it had in view not being that which was actually recorded, but that which it was hoped would be given. In the Commons a vote of censure was only defeated by a majority of 27. It was evident that many of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

supporters of the Government thought that the law had been strained in the Collier appointment. The real defence of Mr. Gladstone was that the position had been offered to those judges who were thought fit for it, and had been declined. It is needless to say that Sir Robert Collier proved a most competent member of the Judicial Committee.

The London Parks Act has long been buried among the legislative lumber of the last century, but in 1872, when it was introduced by Mr. Ayrton, it led to a very lively and occasionally a very amusing controversy. Sir W. Harcourt was its most damaging, its cleverest and most sarcastic critic. The Bill had its origin in the disturbances of 1867, and its object was to regulate the holding of meetings in Hyde Park. Sir W. Harcourt, with Magna Charta in one hand and the Metropolitan Police Act in the other, riddled its provisions with their peculiar geographical restrictions. The Tory leaders came to his aid, and Mr. Hardy declared that all the difficulties with regard to meetings in the Park had arisen out of the fact that during the disturbances in 1867 the Prime Minister had set himself against order. Mr. Disraeli went further, and said that Mr. Gladstone had maintained a sullen silence in 1867, and had never opened his lips except to address a tumultuous mob from the balcony of his own private residence. Mr. Gladstone at once stated that there was not a shred of truth in this statement, and how Mr. Disraeli came to make it was never explained. The Prime Minister was very angry with Mr. Hardy, and said that if there was ever any man who contrived to import into the plainest practical matter of business and common sense the acid and venomous spirit of party it was the right hon. gentleman. Sir W. Harcourt was delighted with what he called the Wars of the Chiefs, and said that now that the rogues

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

had fallen out there was some chance that honest men would get their own. The Parks Bill passed in a somewhat modified form, but, as will be found, a good deal was heard of the regulations under it the next session.

CHAPTER VIII

1872

MARCH 19 was the famous Dilke night in the House of Commons. Sir Charles Dilke had previously made a speech at Newcastle Republican in its tone and ideas, and on this night he brought forward a motion for inquiry into the Civil List, or, in other words, into the income and expenditure of the sovereign. Lord Bury attempted to stop the debate on the ground that Sir Charles Dilke was an avowed Republican, and that his position was inconsistent with the oath he had taken. The Speaker, however, declined to interfere, and since that time other men of admitted Republican principles, like Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Keir Hardie, have sat in the House of Commons. Sir Charles Dilke was ever a dull speaker. He had carefully prepared himself. He had, as he always had on every question on which he spoke, a great array of facts, but his treatment of the question was dry, spiritless and uninteresting. He certainly did not give one the idea of a man who was likely to lead a revolution. He gradually lost the ear of the House, and the latter part of his speech was delivered amidst a ceaseless hum of conversation—the latter a method of dealing with bores which has now become obsolete. It was probably as deadly as noisy cries of “Divide,” for nothing can be more trying to a speaker than addressing an assembly where every man is talking to his neighbour. Mr. Gladstone was deeply moved by the conduct of Sir Charles Dilke, and gave his then supporter and future colleague a very severe dressing. He denounced him for his want of patriotism, his inaccuracy of statement,

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and his appeals to the ignorance of the people, and protested against the idea of reopening the bargain with the sovereign. So far there had been nothing in the nature of a scene, but the appearance of Mr. Auberon Herbert was the signal for an outburst of yells and groans. He was appalled at his reception, but he did not flinch before the storm. When the noise had a little abated he tried to proceed with his speech; but the stout lungs of the Tories were too much for him. For fifteen minutes the disturbance raged. Mr. Herbert's lips were seen moving, and occasionally a word could be heard. Then the Speaker intervened, and made an appeal to the good sense of the House. This led to a change of tactics. The interruptions became less violent. The Tory benches gradually emptied, and the Liberal benches also thinned. The object of the manœuvre became apparent when a motion was made to count the House, but the attempt failed. The Conservatives were determined that Mr. Auberon Herbert's speech should not reach the public, and Lord G. Hamilton espied strangers. The galleries were cleared, but the absence of the reporters did not allay the storm. Mr. Herbert went on with his speech amidst incessant shouts and groans. He endeavoured to strike a bargain with his tormentors, and offered if they would hear him only to speak for five minutes. Mr. Headlam produced a watch with the view of timing the luckless orator. There was no formal acceptance of his proposal, but for a brief period Mr. Herbert was heard with somewhat less interruption. He made the mistake of attempting to extend the time, and immediately the Tories were in full cry. Then came the discreditable cock-crowing incident. A member, who if rumour at the time were true is still amongst us, went behind the Speaker's chair and imitated the crowing of the cock with an accuracy

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

which would have delighted M. Rostand. There was much laughter; but the introduction of the cries of the farmyard seemed to touch the self-respect of the House. Mr. Dodson gravely asked whether these sounds were in order; and the Speaker said that he had never witnessed such a scene, and that it had given him great pain. The Tories, however, would not hear Mr. Herbert, and he had finally to give up the attempt to speak. When the reporters were readmitted the House was dividing on Sir Charles Dilke's motion for certain returns in regard to the Civil List; but it only received the support of two members, Mr. George Anderson, one of the members for Glasgow, and Sir W. Lawson—the tellers being Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Auberon Herbert.

The Ballot Bill, which the Lords had rejected in 1871, was again introduced in 1872. In Committee on the Bill the Government sustained a defeat by one vote. A proposal had been made and accepted by the Government that a voter who wilfully exposed his ballot paper should be guilty of an offence under the Act. Sir W. Harcourt proposed to add the words “with corrupt intent.” He protested against the growing passion for creating misdemeanours, and said that an eminent counsel had told them that they were being manufactured at the rate of five hundred a year. When the division was taken the tellers on one side could not agree as to the numbers, and the House had to divide again, with the result that the amendment was carried against the Government by 167 to 166. This was the first reverse the Government had sustained. It seemed to offer the Opposition a vision of the promised land, and they cheered with the utmost enthusiasm. On the following day they had another gratifying triumph. Sir Massey Lopes' motion on the subject of local rates, which really prepared the way for the vast system of grants in aid of

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

local taxation that now exist, was carried against the Government by a majority of 100; but, of course, many of their own supporters voted for it, and it did not in the least weaken their position. On the next Government night Mr. Forster, who was in charge of the Ballot Bill, stated that the Government could not accept the amendment carried by Sir W. Harcourt, and he proposed instead that the words should read, that any person who wilfully exposed his ballot paper for the purpose of making it known for whom he had voted should be guilty of an offence. Sir W. Harcourt attacked the proposed amendment in a very clever speech. The Government, he said, had given it up last year, and it was not in the Bill as originally introduced. Mr. Leatham, he said, was its putative father, and it was not lawfully begotten. It had been put in a basket and left at the door of Mr. Forster's office. Sir G. Grey, who had been Home Secretary in Lord Palmerston's Government, expressed regret that the Government had accepted the amendment, and some one cried out, "There goes a dozen votes." The Government proposal was defeated by a majority of 27, and there was again a great demonstration of Conservative satisfaction and delight. The House was keenly interested as to the course the Government would take. They had declared the amendment to be vital, and it was supposed that they would at once move to report progress. They did nothing of the kind, and later in the sitting Mr. Gladstone announced that the Government intended to persevere with the Ballot Bill. A serious difference arose between the two Houses on the Bill. The Lords proposed that it should be optional, but the Government would not, of course, consent to a proposal which would have made the measure ridiculous, and the Peers in the end gave way.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

In this session a rather remarkable incident occurred on the Scotch Education Bill. The second reading of the Bill was carried by a large majority, but on the motion to go into Committee, which could then be debated and on which an amendment could be moved, Mr. Gordon, afterwards Lord Gordon, proposed a resolution providing that the law and practice of Scotland in respect of religious instruction should be continued by provisions in the Bill. I may state that as it stood, and as it ultimately passed, the question of religious education was left entirely to the School Boards. The amendment was carried against the Government by a majority of seven, 216 to 209. The Opposition had made a great whip up for the division, and the ministerial Whips were caught in an ambush. It might have been thought that this would have been fatal to the Bill. It was not so. All that the House had decided was that it should not "now" go into Committee. The Government proceeded with the Bill on a future day as if nothing had happened. They took no notice of the amendment, and in due course the Bill became the law of the land.

Mr. Glyn, afterwards Lord Wolverton, who was Chief Whip during the Gladstone Government of 1868, had a direct and vigorous way of dealing with mutineers. Mr. Barclay, who was returned in 1872 as a tenant-farmer member for Forfarshire, tried to form a small agricultural party on the Liberal side. It numbered, I think, three all told, and Mr. Barclay, on the eve of a division, went to Mr. Glyn and told him that the support of himself and his two friends depended on the Government giving a promise to support a certain proposal in the agricultural interest. "Go to h—" was the short and decisive reply of the Whip, and the agricultural party was at once blown into its original elements. While on the subject of farmers' representatives, I may mention that Mr.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Duckham, one of the members for Herefordshire, elected in 1880, was a Liberal and also tenant farmer. He was a very estimable man, with a face so serious that it might be described as melancholy. His voice harmonised with his looks, for he talked in a most lugubrious tone, reminding one of the phrase of Junius—"the whine of a ruined grazier." After one of his speeches on the gloomy prospects of agriculture, Sir William Harcourt, it was said, turned to one of his colleagues and said of Mr. Duckham that he was "a living monument of agricultural depression."

CHAPTER IX

1873

THE chief business of the session of 1873 was the Irish University Bill, the object of which was to cut down the third branch of the upas-tree of British ascendancy in Ireland to which Mr. Gladstone had referred in the election campaign of 1868. Mr. Disraeli in his speech on the Address was very sarcastic and pungent. Alluding to the coming University Bill, he hoped that it would not sacrifice a famous university for the mechanical mediocrity of an Examination Board. There had been during the vacation some of the wild speaking which we now have in still more abundant measure. Mr. Disraeli talked of the "vagrant rhetoric of the recess," and his references to it might almost be applied to some of the speaking in the autumn of 1911. Schemes, he said, had been brought forward by which every man should become a landed proprietor without paying for the land, by which the House of Lords was to be permitted to retain their political functions on condition that they did not use them, and for the Government taking over the railways and working the collieries. But when every town had its debating society, and every village its agitator, it was impossible to prevent a certain degree of nonsense being conceived and expressed. He feared that there was a prospect of hurry-scurry debates and helter-skelter legislation. The Royal Speech as usual had concluded with a passage commending the deliberations of Parliament to the guidance of the Supreme. With the last passage of the speech, said

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Disraeli, which commits our deliberations to the care of Almighty God I fully agree, for I believe there was never a time when it was more required. This remark, so to speak, brought down the House. Nothing that I ever heard the leader of the Opposition say produced such a torrent of laughter, though I fancy some members were rather shocked to find the pious aspiration of the Royal Speech converted into a sarcastic jibe at the expense of the Government. It was in this speech that Mr. Disraeli described diplomacy as "force without violence," which at any rate would seem to be the German interpretation of the word.

On February 14 Mr. Gladstone brought in the unfortunate Irish University Education Bill. It constituted a new university in which Trinity College was to be absorbed, and it provided that there should be no faculty of theology, and that there should be no professor of moral philosophy or modern history in the new university. The Bill was at first very well received. The Conservative Opposition rather held their hands; but the criticism of the Bill grew day by day more and more hostile. While Irish Protestants resisted the transfer of Trinity College to the new university, the opposition to the Bill centred itself mainly in what was called the gagging clauses. Lord E. Fitzmaurice, then regarded as one of the keenest minds on the Liberal benches, went over the clauses and attempted to show that under it students on the mere profession of religious scruples could do anything they liked, and would not suffer in the examination room. A student might declare that two and two made five, or that the Ptolemaic system of astronomy was the right and proper one for this century on the ground of religious scruple, and the examiners could not interfere. What enemy of Ireland, he asked, had prepared the Bill? Mr. Fawcett made a furious

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

attack on the Bill with reference to the gagging clauses. So evident was the feeling of the House that Mr. Lowe, in his speech, stated that these clauses were not of the essence of the Bill and would soon disappear. Mr. Hardy declared that religion and history would be banished from the new university, and applied to it Milton's words—

“A shape,
If shape it might be called, which shape had none
Distinguishable in feature, joint or limb.”

Sir W. Harcourt, though he supported the second reading of the Bill, made a critical and rather hostile speech. It was a delusion to suppose that they could legislate according to the views of the Roman Catholic prelates. He described the Bill as a fair offer, and he commented on the fact that Mr. Hardy, one of the strongest denominationalists in England, advocated purely secular education for Ireland. The gagging clauses were the most odious deformity that defaced the Bill. They were the anathema of the Vatican against modern civilisation. They breathed the spirit of the Index, and comprehended the whole Dunciad of the syllabus. The clauses had been slain and would soon be buried. I need not say that this trenchant and vigorous attack was loudly cheered by the opponents of the Bill. Lord John Manners could only adequately describe the state of Ireland under the Bill by quoting some of the concluding lines of the Dunciad—

“Thus at her fell approach and secret might,
Art after all goes out and all is night.
See skulking truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of casuistry heaped on her head.
Philosophy that leaned on heaven before
Shrinks to her second cause and is no more.
Religion, blushing, hides her sacred fires,
And unaware morality expires.
Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness buries all.”

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Gladstone, I suppose, was the great Anarch. Mr. Bernal Osborne was unable to understand how such a Bill came to be framed by a Cabinet which had eight Oxford first classes among its members. The fate of the Bill depended on the Irish Catholic members, and it was not until Mr. O'Reilly spoke that it was made certain that they would vote against it. In closing the debate for the Opposition Mr. Disraeli, who now saw that the Bill was doomed, attacked it with great liveliness, and made the somewhat remarkable statement that under it the Shakers or the Jumpers could confer a degree in divinity. The House laughed incredulously, but Mr. Disraeli added that the White Quakers had offered to himself a degree. He discovered that the Bill, like nearly all the other measures of the Government, had the taint of confiscation. In all the years of the Gladstone Ministry confiscation was the note that ran through Mr. Disraeli's speeches. On this occasion he said that they had despoiled churches, threatened every corporation in the country, criticised every profession and vexed every trade. Mr. Gladstone evidently knew when he spoke that the Bill was lost, and he discussed the remarkable change that had come over public opinion in regard to it. At its introduction it was received with universal favour. The most conclusive proof of this was to be found, he said, in the attitude of that valuable class of the community called waiters on providence. A morning or two after the introduction of the Bill there was not a waiter on providence in the whole of the vast metropolis who was not its decided partisan. The waiters on providence, however, were like the loose rolling cargo of a ship, certain in heavy weather to give their weight against the vessel. The consequence was, that whereas three weeks ago we had the whole army of them numerous as the hordes of Xerxes on our side, we had not a solitary

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

individual of that species on our side now. He solemnly appealed to the House to pass the Bill and remove the last of the religious and social grievances of Ireland. The appeal was in vain, and the Bill was rejected by a majority of 287 to 284. A scene of great excitement followed. The whole Opposition sprang to their feet and cheered lustily. The Whips stood at the table for some time before the numbers could be announced, and after they were read out the cheering, which had almost changed into yelling, was renewed. All eyes were turned to Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Bright had gone up and shaken hands with him, and then the Liberals relieved their pent-up feelings by a great cheer of confidence in their leader. Mr. Gladstone rose and simply said that it was his duty to move that the House should adjourn till Thursday, that was to say for two days.

Mr. Gladstone resigned and Mr. Disraeli was asked to form a Government. This task he declined to undertake, on the ground that he could not carry on the affairs of the country in the present Parliament, and that he could not dissolve—though the Queen had offered to allow him to take that course—because he had no policy on which to go to the country. Mr. Disraeli, in the statement which he made in defence of his action, told the House that he had had enough of the experience of trying to govern the country with a minority in the House of Commons. If he did, said the Conservative leader, with a painful recollection of the events of 1867, Mr. Gladstone would come down with his thumbscrews and other instruments of torture. They would not get Supply without a lecture, and would not be able to perform the most routine work of Government except under pedantic and ignominious conditions. They would, he went on to say, be in the paradise of abstract resolutions. One member would propose the abolition

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the income-tax, and another the abolition of the diplomatic service, while a third would move a resolution for the assimilation of the borough and county franchise. Mr. Disraeli declined to enter a paradise of this description. He endeavoured to console his supporters by assuring them that the Tory party occupied the most satisfactory position which it had filled since the days of its greatest leaders Pitt and Grenville. It had divested itself, he said, of the exereescences which were not indigenous to its native growth. Roars of laughter greeted this naïve and diplomatic method of saying that the Tory party under his guidance had abandoned many of its prejudices and principles. He went on to say that the sacredness of endowments, the tenure of landed property, the free disposal and existence of every kind of property, all institutions and all principles were impugned, and would in due course become burning and blazing questions. It would be the duty of the Constitutional party to lead the public mind in these troubled times, and when they entered on a career which must be noble, and which he believed would be triumphant, they would remember not altogether with unkindness that he, as the trustee of their honour and interests, prevented one obstacle from being placed in their way, by forming a weak and discredited administration. These consoling reflections were received with only qualified satisfaction by his supporters. It is evident from their tone and spirit that Mr. Disraeli had no idea of the change of opinion which was going on in the country, and no anticipation of the victory of 1874. If he had had any belief that the constituencies had become Conservative, he would have formed a Government and at once dissolved. Though Mr. Gladstone resumed office, his Government never recovered from the blow inflicted on it by the defeat of

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the Irish University Bill. It went on with the other business of the session, but a spirit of despondency hung over both the ministry and their supporters.

One of the lighter incidents of the session was a visit of the Shah of Persia to the House of Commons. It took place towards the close of a morning sitting on July 2. For once the Peers' bench in the gallery was covered with red, this being the only colour with which the king of kings would allow himself to come in contact. The Bill under discussion was the Judicature Bill. A motion had been made to report progress just before the Shah entered, and Mr. Gladstone in vain pleaded with the House to go on. The motion to report progress was agreed to, but the House was determined to show itself in a boisterous mood and to let the Shah see a division. The second reading of a Turnpike Bill was moved, and Sir R. Fowler proposed the adjournment of the debate. As a matter of fact no one had spoken, but the division was conducted with as much spirit as if a great party issue had been involved. When the question was put a loud shout of "Aye" was followed by a still louder shout of "No." Though the interest in the matter was purely artificial, there was as much noise and excitement as at a division on a really important question. His Majesty was much astonished to find the House of Commons in such a school-boy spirit, and his solemn and sombre face was overspread with a faint smile. Though nothing more was involved in the division than the adjournment of the debate on a Turnpike Bill, a desperate effort was made to get up such a cheer as follows a great party triumph. Mr. Gladstone went up to the Shah, and, Sir H. Rawlinson acting as interpreter, had a short conversation with His Majesty.

In the 'sixties and 'seventies a Woman's Suffrage Bill was a regular parliamentary annual. It never got read

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

a second time but once, and when the Committee stage came it was forthwith destroyed. One of the strongest opponents of woman's suffrage was Mr. Leatham, a brother-in-law of Mr. Bright, and he made pungent speeches against it. In 1873 he seemed to anticipate the militant suffragette. He spoke of the monstrous and repulsive creature that was now looming on the political horizon, the *femme-homme*. In those days every one delighted to have a hit at Mr. Ayrton, and Mr. Leatham admitted that it might be an advantage to have a blooming and agreeable First Commissioner of Works, but what would become of some great Bill if the Attorney-General eloped with the Solicitrix-General, or if public business was brought to a standstill by the *accouchement* of the Prime Minister?

Sir W. Harcourt, who had attacked the Parks Bill, now criticised regulations which had been made under it. He had been already assailing them in the Press. It was in the *Times*, I think, that he said that they would need a new guide to the Parks, which might be described as "Every man his own Ayrton." He made great fun of the rules which prohibited the use of soap by bathers, and prevented boys from fishing for minnow. Why, he asked, should the boys be deprived of the pleasures of hope? There had been, he said, four editions of the rules which would long be considered as one of the curiosities of literature; but everybody probably has now forgotten them. He advised the Government to allow the Parks Act to become a dead letter. The whole speech was directed against what in those days was called grandmotherly legislation, and he wound it up by saying that if effect were to be given to all these annoying and vexatious restrictions, they would have to emigrate in order to seek liberty in a more despotic country.

Mr. Lowe was the evil genius of the first Gladstone

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Government. He made several administrative blunders. He was at open war with Mr. Ayrton, and, as it became known later, with Mr. Baxter, the Secretary to the Treasury. On one considerable matter, the Zanzibar contract, the Chancellor of the Exchequer acted without consulting Mr. Baxter, the Secretary to the Treasury—the official specially charged with the business of mail contracts—and he laid on the table a third edition of the contract, which Mr. Baxter had never seen. On the day of the prorogation the Secretary to the Treasury resigned, on the ground that he could no longer get on with Mr. Lowe. It was absolutely necessary, as he said to me, and as I wrote at the time, that some stand should be made against the overbearing incompetence of Mr. Lowe. He added that Mr. Monsell, the Postmaster-General, ought long ago to have resigned, because he had to a large extent been superseded in his office by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Gladstone evidently felt that Mr. Lowe must be removed from the Treasury, and a day or two after Mr. Baxter's resignation a considerable reconstruction of ministry was announced. Mr. Gladstone decided to unite the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer with that of Prime Minister, as he subsequently did in 1880, and Lord F. Cavendish, hitherto private secretary to Mr. Gladstone, joined the Treasury Board in order to assist his chief in the work of the Exchequer. Lord Ripon resigned the Presidency of the Council, and shortly after his conversion to the Church of Rome was announced. Mr. Bruce, who was rather a cautious administrator and had not been a great success at the Home Office, became President of the Council and was sent to the Lords as Lord Aberdare—some one suggested that he should have taken the title of Lord Neverdare—and Mr. Lowe went to the Home Office. The Government did not last long enough to show

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

whether he would have been more fortunate at the Home Office than at the Treasury. Mr. Bright on this occasion rejoined the Government as Chancellor of the Duchy, from which Mr. Childers had retired. A question much discussed at the time was whether Mr. Gladstone had vacated his seat by accepting the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. The point was never authoritatively settled, but it was suggested, whether correctly or not, that doubts on this point precipitated the dissolution which took place early in the following year.

The 1868-1874 Parliament was remarkable for the amount of work that it accomplished. Every session except the last was marked by the passing of great measures which, though fiercely opposed, always reached the Statute Book. The old conventions of the House were still a living force. The second reading of a Bill was regarded as settling the question of principle, and in Committee the amendments and discussions were really directed to the improvement or modification of its details. All that is now altered, and both parties are equally responsible for the change. Not a great measure has been proposed for the last twenty-five or thirty years by any Government, which the Opposition has not attempted to kill or destroy in Committee. It is this policy which has fostered and developed obstruction, because if one party could not directly defeat the Bill under consideration they could, by prolonging the discussions on it, either compel its abandonment or render it impossible to proceed with its successor. So far as individual politicians are concerned, the great feature of Mr. Gladstone's first Parliament was that it ruined the reputation of Mr. Lowe, and that it made that of Sir W. Harcourt. Mr. Lowe was a failure in office, and he made the contempt which he felt for the Tory squires and the Liberal bourgeoisie rather too patent. Sir W.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Harcourt in this Parliament won his political position. His speeches were always clever, vigorous and polished. If they showed sometimes too elaborate preparation, they interested and delighted his hearers. His encounters with Mr. Ayrton over the Parks Bill, though now forgotten, were very lively and amusing. Sir W. Harcourt was then a Whig rather than a Radical, and in some of his speeches he poured contempt on the modern passion for regulating everything and everybody. So strong was his parliamentary position that Mr. Gladstone towards the end of the session of 1873 made him Solicitor-General.

That Mr. Lowe was conscious of his own failings, the grimly humorous epitaph that he composed on himself is ample evidence. Many versions have been published, but probably the following is the best :

“ Here lie the bones of Robert Lowe,
A treacherous friend, a bitter foe.
Whither his restless soul has fled,
May not be thought, much less be said.
If to the realms of peace and love,
Farewell to happiness above.
If to a place of lower level,
We can't congratulate the devil.”

In all the graver disputes which arose in the first Gladstone Parliament between the two Houses the Lords invariably gave way. They had a wholesome dread of Mr. Gladstone. More than once they carried resistance to the last point, but when it came to the question of fighting or yielding they gave way. They were, in fact, afraid to come to close quarters with the Liberal leader. They shrank from making the existence or the powers of the House of Lords the subject of conflict with Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal party. They knew his strength in the country, and they were wise enough not to enter into a struggle with him. The same feeling

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

existed as will be found in Mr. Gladstone's second Parliament. The Lords did not like the Land Bill of 1881, but they accepted it. Lord Salisbury attempted to persuade them to fight the Commons on the Irish Arrears Bill in 1882, but his party refused to follow him. It was not, in fact, until after Home Rule became part of the Liberal programme that the Lords ventured to face a conflict with the Commons.

CHAPTER X

1874

ON January 24, Mr. Gladstone issued an address to the electors of Greenwich announcing that he had advised Her Majesty to dissolve Parliament, and holding out to the electors the prospect of the abolition of the income-tax if he were maintained in office by a sufficient majority. Mr. Gladstone two or three days after addressed the electors of Greenwich. His great rival had, of course, to answer him in a speech to the electors of Buckinghamshire. "Mr. Disraeli will dine at the farmers' ordinary at Aylesbury on Saturday next" was the peculiar and somewhat bucolic form in which the meeting was announced. I was present on that occasion, and it was interesting to see the man of mystery with his pale and impassive face in a company of jovial and rubicund farmers. In his printed address to the electors the Conservative leader had made much of a little-known act of the Government in regard to the Straits of Malacca. He maintained that ministers had sacrificed British interests and had by an act of ignorance rarely equalled relinquished a treaty which secured the freedom of the Straits of Malacca for our trade with China and Japan. Mr. Gladstone asserted that Mr. Disraeli's information was neither accurate nor original. He had found the information with regard to the Straits of Malacca in an article in a magazine written by a gentleman of the name of Bowles—no doubt our friend Mr. Gibson Bowles; but Mr. Gladstone was greatly mistaken if Disraeli did

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

not find that those who played with Bowles might expect rubbers. The treaty to which Mr. Disraeli had taken so much objection had been sanctioned by his own Government before it left office. It is true that this was denied by the Tory leader, but the fact seemed to be that the treaty was in possession of Lord Derby before the resignation of the ministry and that he did not take the slightest objection to it, though it was formally signed after Mr. Gladstone came into power. The country did not care a farthing about the Straits of Malacca, and even if Mr. Disraeli's impeachment had been well founded it would not have in the slightest degree disturbed the minds of the electors. Mr. Disraeli's speech at Aylesbury was not at all sanguine or triumphant in its tone. It was evident to all those who heard it that he had no anticipation of the victory which awaited his party at the polls. The dissolution had taken him, as every one else, by surprise, and he had not been aware of the growth of Conservative feeling in the country. It was in this speech that he told the story of the Earl of Derby and the sherry. Lord Derby—he who had been Prime Minister—suffered a great deal from the gout, and some one sent him a sample of sherry which he assured him would cure the gout. The Earl tried the sherry and returned it with the remark, "I prefer the gout." So Mr. Disraeli argued people might prefer the income-tax to the taxation which Mr. Gladstone would substitute for it. In a speech at Woolwich Mr. Gladstone made much fun of the Tory leader's interest in the Straits of Malacca, and delivered with exuberant delight the following lines—

"The farmers at Aylesbury were gathered to dine,
They ate their prime beef and drank their old wine;
With the wine there was beer, with the beer there was bacca.
The liquors went round and the banquet was crowned
With thundering news from the Straits of Malacca."

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

The Liberal leader added that, with regard to foreign affairs, this country should act on this principle—

“Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel ; but, being in,
Bear’t that the opposed may beware of thee.”

It is worth noting that he used the same quotation in another speech ten years later with reference to an impending quarrel with the House of Lords.

The election resulted in the return of a Conservative majority of over fifty, which, owing to divisions in the Liberal party, and the uncertainty of the Irish vote, was for all practical purposes considerably larger. Mr. Disraeli became Prime Minister with a strong and compact Cabinet of a dozen members. Sir S. Northcote was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Richard Cross Home Secretary, Lord Derby Foreign Secretary, and Lord Salisbury Secretary for India. The new Parliament began its work on March 19. Sir W. Stirling Maxwell, who was selected to move the Address, was a man of literary eminence and considerable gifts. He had been defeated in Perthshire in 1869, after a memorable contest with the late Mr. C. S. Parker, but in 1874 he recovered the seat and his victory was considered one of the greatest triumphs in that year of Conservative reaction. It was on this account that he was selected to move the Address, but in his speech he travelled beyond the colourless and non-controversial tone in which the mover and seconder of the Address usually speak. Referring to Mr. Gladstone, he said that the late Prime Minister had determined to astound the country by a dissolution, and the country, not to be outdone, had astonished the minister by the reply that it had given. The Conservatives, he said in a very ironical vein, would never forget the obligations under which they lay to the minister and his

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

colleagues for placing them where they now were. Sir W. Stirling Maxwell was not only a political but a personal friend of Mr. Disraeli, and he paid him a high compliment, saying that in all the changes through which he had passed he had afforded fresh evidence of the resources of his genius. Mr. Gladstone was a little surprised at the course which Sir W. Stirling Maxwell had taken. He congratulated the member for Perthshire on his powers of sarcasm, but doubted whether he was to be congratulated on the prudence of the course which he had adopted. In any event the example set by Sir W. Stirling Maxwell has not been followed, for ever since the speeches of the mover and seconder have been more or less couched in language free from the spirit and the bitterness of party politics.

Mr. Disraeli was soon brought face to face with some of his irresponsible talk when in Opposition. On April 15, Lord R. Montague asked whether he had not said on one occasion that Ireland was ruled by legislation of the most severe and stringent character, and on another by laws of a coercive and stringent severity that did not exist in any other quarter of the globe, and whether the Prime Minister intended to maintain the legislation so described. Mr. Disraeli's reply was marked by its cynical audacity. He observed that a great deal had happened since he made use of those words. He declined to discuss or express opinions on subjects of such importance in reply to a question, and so dismissed the inconvenient declarations with which he had been confronted. The Liberals were so discouraged and the Conservatives so strong that the session was on the whole comparatively quiet. The new ministry had entered into the great financial inheritance left them by Mr. Gladstone. They had a magnificent surplus to dispose of, and though the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir S. Northcote, did not

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

abolish the income-tax he reduced it to twopence, a figure at which the remotest generations are never likely to see it again. He also repealed the sugar duties, which were not reimposed till the period of the South African War.

A passing flutter of excitement was created in the political world by Mr. Ward Hunt, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who in proposing the Navy Estimates charged the late Government with starving the Navy and with securing economy at the expense of the fleet. He went so far as to speak of it as a phantom fleet. Mr. Goschen replied to Mr. Hunt, and said very truly that if Mr. Hunt was going to ask for additional votes for the Navy he ought to have done so before the surplus was disposed of. A little later the First Lord was thrown over by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said that the Government had no idea of reconstructing the fleet. As some one said at the time it was Mr. Hunt—a man of immense physical proportions—and not the fleet that was reduced to a phantom.

On April 24, Mr. Smollett and Mr. Gladstone had an interesting encounter over the recent dissolution. Mr. Smollett in his speeches showed some of the raciness and robustness of language that distinguished his literary ancestor, and several of his deliverances on the question of votes for women gave great offence to the ladies interested in the movement. The dissolution of 1874 had restored him to Parliament as well as his party to power, and why he should have attacked Mr. Gladstone for appealing to the country it is difficult to see. However he did, and in the course of his speech he said that the stratagem but recoiled on the head of the trickster. The Speaker did not interfere, and the phrase, therefore, may be regarded as within the limits of Parliamentary decorum. Mr. Smollett's motion of censure very nearly

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

fell to the ground because none of his political friends rose to second it. The peculiar course that he had adopted met with no sympathy on the Conservative side of the House; but Mr. Whalley, ever ready to oblige a member in difficulties, came to Mr. Smollett's aid and seconded the motion. Mr. Gladstone treated Mr. Smollett's attack with mingled sarcasm and contempt, but when he came to the charge of being a trickster he became serious and imperative. He wanted to know whether the hon. gentleman adhered to the name of trickster, and asked him to give an answer to a plain question. Mr. Smollett, half rising and showing signs of irritation, said that he would not rise again. "The hon. member," said Mr. Gladstone in a tone of deep indignation, "has addressed members of the House by the insulting and offensive name of tricksters; and when he is asked whether he adheres to that charge he has not the decency or manliness to reply, but takes refuge in an ignoble silence from the consequences of his own act." Mr. Smollett, while he said nothing, looked rather ashamed, and not a cheer came from his own side of the House, while Mr. Gladstone's rebuke was warmly endorsed by his supporters.

On May 13, Sir George (then Mr.) Trevelyan moved the second reading of the County Franchise Bill. In the country Mr. Disraeli had complained of the "disgusting" levity with which Sir George Trevelyan and others had approached a great constitutional question like this. The sponsor of the Bill now said that the word was not worthy of an orator who possessed such a compendious fountain of admirable epithets. He argued that if the agricultural labourer was refused the vote it was natural that he should fall back on the pens of revolutionary scribblers or the tongues of itinerant spouters. This description of the Labour agitators of

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the day was much cheered by the Conservatives, but it was the only sentence in Sir G. Trevelyan's speech that was so honoured. It was in support of this Bill that Mr. Thomas Burt delivered his maiden speech in the House of Commons. Mr. W. E. Forster spoke so strongly in favour of the Bill that Mr. Disraeli, who followed, sneered at the fervour and passion which he had shown. The Prime Minister offered a semi-apology to Sir George Trevelyan for the language which he had used, and rejoiced to hear that the agricultural labourers who had been recently described as serfs were fit for the franchise. He opposed the Bill because if it passed it would be followed by a scheme of redistribution. He was not, he told the House, in favour of rotten boroughs for the purpose of coddling young gentlemen into statesmen, but he talked as Conservative statesmen do now about the social wants of the people and urged the House to resist organic change. The bill was rejected by a majority of one hundred and fourteen.

A motion in favour of the Opening of Museums on Sundays was then one of the ordinary parliamentary annuals. Mr. P. A. Taylor, the Radical member for Leicester, was generally in charge of the motion and his speeches were always frank and breezy. He had no sympathy with the popular view of Sabbath observance, and he stated, when he brought forward his motion in the year 1874, that if adopted it would discourage a deplorable and pernicious sabbatarianism. He gave the House some amusing instances of sabbatarian intolerance in Scotland. An old lady who objected not only to working but to walking on Sundays was reminded that Jesus Christ walked in the fields on the Sabbath-day. Her reply was, "I think nane the better o' the Lord Jesus Christ for that." Though Mr. Taylor had been denounced at Leicester as the champion of Sabbath

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

desecration he had been returned at the last election, as he told the House, by a majority such as few members enjoyed. Mr. Allen, who led the opposition to the motion, was quite as outspoken and trenchant in his language as Mr. Taylor. He asserted that the supporters of the motion out of doors were secularists, infidels, and the republican followers of Mr. Bradlaugh. Parliament was yet a long way from accepting the policy which it has since adopted on the question and the motion was rejected by a majority of 203.

In this session the new Home Secretary, Sir Richard Cross, had both a Factory Bill and a Licensing Bill. They were neither of them great measures; but the one apparently somewhat reduced hours in factories and the other increased the hours of public-house opening. The Licensing Bill underwent a good deal of bantering criticism from Sir W. Lawson, who had by this time established his position as one of the wittiest and most amusing speakers in the House. A new chorus, he said, had been written with regard to the Home Secretary and was now being sung by the residuum in every gin-palace in the country—

“ For Cross is a jolly good fellow,
Whatever the Rads may think ;
He has shortened the hours of work,
And lengthened the hours of drink.”

Sir W. Lawson admitted that it was no use appealing to his own side. We are, he observed, few in number, incoherent in argument, and inconsistent in action, a description of the Liberal party which, though it had some of the exaggeration of the humorist, was not far from the truth. Mr. Goschen appealed to Sir W. Lawson not to strangle the first poor child of a Conservative Government—the weak offspring of a strong Government and a victorious party.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

It was in this session that Mr. Butt moved that the House should go into Committee to consider the present state of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. He developed with copious eloquence his plea for Home Rule. He quoted the same lines from Virgil in support of his motion that Mr. Pitt had used in proposing the union between Great Britain and Ireland—

“Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo
Nec mihi regna peto ; paribus se legibus ambae
Invictae gentes, aeterna in foedera mittant.”¹

This quotation may, therefore, be used to decorate speeches both for Home Rule and for Union, but the words “*ambae gentes*” and “*aeterna foedera*” would seem to show that its sentiment was rather with Mr. Butt than Mr. Pitt. Mr. Disraeli spoke in course of the debate and protested against the morbid sentiment of subjugation on which Irish members delighted to dwell. Ireland had not been more often subjugated than other nations. Englishmen came over with the Normans to Ireland, but they so seldom alluded to the fact that the Normans came over to them that it had been forgotten. If the Irish members held their tongues about subjugation and a conquered race, it would be forgotten in the next generation. It was true, said Mr. Disraeli, that Oliver Cromwell conquered Ireland, but he first conquered England.

The greatest, but as it turned out the most useless, legislative achievement of the session of 1874 was the

¹ “I will not force Italia’s land
To Teucrian rule to bow.
I seek no sceptre for my hand,
No diadem for my brow.
Yet race and race, unquelled and free,
Join hands in deathless amity.”
Connington’s Translation.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Public Worship Regulation Act. It came to the Commons from the Lords with the blessing of the archbishops and most of the bishops, and it was in the charge of Mr. Russell Gurney, the Recorder of London, who was regarded as a man of sound judgment and moderate views. It met with strong opposition from Mr. Gladstone, who pronounced a warm eulogy on the High Church party, at whose ritualistic excess the measure was aimed. The condition of the Church of England before the High Church revival, he said, with impassioned force, was a scandal to Christendom. Its congregations were cold and dead, its music offensive, its clergymen, with the exception of the Evangelical school, were worldly minded and much more eager after preferment than the religious interests of their flocks. Mr. Gladstone placed six resolutions on the paper embodying his views. Sir W. Harcourt appeared as the champion of Protestantism, and had a succession of brilliant encounters with his chief on the Public Worship Regulations Bill. It was, he said, the duty of the Crown and of Parliament to maintain the unalterable Protestantism of the Church. If the rubrics were to be reformed, they must be reformed by the Government and by Parliament, and he asked if ministers were equal to the occasion. Mr. Hardy spoke in sympathy with the views of Mr. Gladstone. While he was addressing the House a cat sprang from under the benches and bounded across the heads and shoulders of members. The movements of the cat excited a good deal of commotion, but in the end it disappeared through the door. Mr. Hardy reminded the House that the Synod of Dort had been disturbed by an intrusion of the same character. It was in this debate that Mr. Disraeli declared, on the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, that the object of the Bill was to put down ritualism. "I mean by ritualism," he said, "the practice by a certain

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

portion of the clergy of the Church of England of ceremonies which they themselves confess are symbolical of doctrines which they are pledged by every solemn contract which can bind men to their sovereign and their country to denounce and repudiate." "The Mass in masquerade" was another phrase which he hurled at the ritualists. Mr. Gladstone on this question was out of agreement with his party. They repudiated his resolutions, and he was left to fight the battle of the ritualists almost alone. In Committee he proposed the omission of the provision giving an appeal from the decision of a bishop, refusing to institute proceedings, to the archbishop of the province. He declared that this provision was opposed to the principles of episcopal Church government, and in support of his view referred to a Canonist of the name of Van Espen. Sir W. Harcourt declared that he had never heard of this person, an admission which was greeted with a severely ironical cheer from Mr. Gladstone. The cheer was followed by the proud retort that England was governed not by the canon law of Rome but by the common law of England. When the Bill went back to the Lords, the provision allowing an appeal from the bishop to the archbishop was struck out. On its return to the Commons, Sir W. Harcourt moved that the Lords' amendment should be disagreed with in a speech in which he carried his antagonism to Mr. Gladstone on this question to an extent which was somewhat offensive, and all the more so that he paid an exaggerated and extravagant compliment to Mr. Disraeli. In the Upper House Lord Salisbury had talked of the "blustering majority" in the Commons. Sir W. Harcourt said that he would not indulge in the intemperate language which had been used in another place; but would leave to the Prime Minister the defence of this famous assembly "against

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the ill-advised railings of a rash and rancorous tongue, even if it were the tongue of a Cabinet Minister and a Secretary of State." The proposal, he said, had been defeated in the other House mainly by the High Church bishops and half a dozen ritualistic Lords-in-Waiting. Sir W. Harcourt appealed to the Prime Minister "to relieve himself from the distracted counsels of a divided Cabinet." All England, he added, would soon be divided into two camps, the camp of Sacerdotalism and Ultramontaniam and the camp which was opposed to priestly pretensions. Mr. Disraeli to some extent responded to Sir W. Harcourt's high-flown Protestant sentiments, and seemed disposed to put himself at the head of a new Reformation. He described the ritualists as a small and pernicious sect quite distinct from the High Church party, but he probably found that if he acted on Sir W. Harcourt's advice he would destroy his Government. It was in this speech that he offered his famous defence of Lord Salisbury. "My noble friend," he said, "does not measure his language. He is a master of gibes and flouts and jeers, and is not superior to the temptation of taunting respectable men like ourselves of being a blustering majority so as to stimulate our *amour propre* and lead us to take a course which would be fatal to the Bill." Mr. Gladstone made a strong and somewhat contemptuous attack on Sir W. Harcourt. He incidentally used the phrase "the party to which I believe we both belong" and charged him with making a pretentious display for purely party purposes. Adopting a patronising and paternal tone towards his old colleague he described him as still in his parliamentary youth. "My hon. friend has not yet sown his parliamentary wild oats, but when he has completed that operation and combined the great powers which he possesses with a larger degree of temper, wisdom, and consideration for

80

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the feelings of others—a greater degree of strictness and rigour in stating the arguments of his opponents—if, besides, he continues his studies in ecclesiastical law, he will, in fact, consummate the attainment of every political virtue and eclipse and outshine all former notabilities of Parliament.” The House, though it was out of sympathy with Mr. Gladstone, greatly enjoyed this superb bit of irony. Mr. Disraeli, however, did not ask the House to insist on the proposal which the Lords had rejected. Curiously enough, Lord Salisbury subsequently denied having used the phrase which had led to these lively and interesting speeches. He had not spoken of the blustering majority of the House of Commons. He owned, indeed, to the word blustering, but he had used it in an abstract sense. This reminds one of Sydney Smith’s story of the Scotch lady who asked her partner at a ball “what he thought of love in the abstract.”

CHAPTER XI

1875

WHEN the session of 1875 opened, Mr. Gladstone was no longer the leader of the Liberal party, and Lord Hartington had, just before Parliament met, been chosen, mainly through the influence of Mr. Bright, as the leader of the party in the House of Commons. As every one knows, Lord Hartington's qualities were more solid than brilliant. He was not a man of rapid insight or of swift decision. He had not a trace of imagination in his mental equipment; but he had the capacity of mastering facts and of forming on them a judgment which was generally sound and always supported by substantial arguments. His greatest asset was his character, which in its perfect integrity and downright honesty secured him the respect of all men. Those who saw him lead the Liberal party through these somewhat forlorn years must respect his courage, his patience, his perseverance and his indifference to partial revolts and unmerited criticisms. He had his first encounter with Mr. Disraeli in the debate on the Address. He contrasted with considerable effect the speeches and declarations of ministers and their supporters in the country with the policy pursued by them in office. Mr. Disraeli had an easy way of getting rid of inconvenient charges of this kind. He declined to acknowledge the force or validity of the quotations made by Lord Hartington. "It is the habit," he said, "of gentlemen opposite, and the noble lord has assumed it

82

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

as if he were born to it, to seek out the most violent speeches made by the most unimportant persons in the most obscure places, and the most absurd newspaper articles appearing in the dullest and most uninfluential newspapers, and then say that these are the opinions of the great Conservative party. That which is said from this bench, and for which we are responsible, I will not shrink from, but I must protest against the grotesque reminiscences of the noble lord."

Lord Hartington was not the only man who had something to say of speeches of Tories in the country. Mr. A. M. Sullivan, soon after the opening of Parliament, called attention to attacks made during the recess by Tory speakers on the Irish party. Mr. Sullivan, I may say, was a considerable figure in this and in the succeeding Parliament. He was a rather impressionable and excitable speaker. His rhetoric was always vigorous and sometimes epigrammatic; but his gesticulation was excessive and too animated. On this occasion he called attention to the speeches which he declared to be of a provocative character. First, he referred to a speech made by Sir John Astley—a much better sportsman than politician—in which he described the Nationalist party as "forty confounded rascals." The House, I am bound to say, was more amused than horrified. Then he took up a speech made by a more serious person than Sir John Astley—Mr. Lopes—afterwards Lord Justice Lopes. In this he spoke of the Irish members as that "disreputable band," but he had, at the previous sitting, explained that he used the word in the sense in which it was given in Johnson's dictionary, "not creditable." There was a long pause, and then Mr. Newdegate intervened, but not in the interests of peace, for he described the conduct of the Home Rulers as obnoxious and offensive, and advised them to stay away

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

from the House. Mr. Disraeli made light of the wounded feelings of the Irish members. He thought the glowing rhetoric of Mr. Sullivan was hardly worthy of the occasion, but he admitted that Mr. Lopes's language, if neither very flagrant nor very extravagant, was a little strong. It was, he added, the conventional language of the recess. The Liberals described the Conservatives as the party that practised bribery and corruption, while the Tories held up the Liberals as revolutionary and as favouring the most violent and unconstitutional projects. Mr. Lopes subsequently withdrew, or at least explained away, the offending phrase.

On February 19, Dr. Kenealy, who had been elected for Stoke-on-Trent as the champion of the Claimant, appeared at the bar to take his seat. He could get no one to introduce him, and he walked up the floor with his umbrella in one hand and his hat in the other, as if they would take the place of living sponsors. He was received in dead silence, but he was not in the least abashed. He hung his umbrella on the mace, a greater outrage than has been perpetrated on that venerable symbol since Cromwell ordered the bauble to be taken away. The Speaker pointed out that it was usual for a new member chosen at a by-election to be introduced by two members, but he added that the practice seemed to have been adopted for the purpose of identification. Dr. Kenealy desired to discuss the matter. He was told, however, that he could not do so, and that he must withdraw below the bar. Mr. Disraeli at once moved that the ordinary rule should not be insisted on, for, as he added, amid some laughter, there was no doubt of the identity of the person in this case. Mr. Bright had so much respect for the choice of a great constituency that he offered to walk to the table with Dr. Kenealy if he would accept his companionship, and he

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

believed that Mr. Whalley would have no objection to take the same course. This generous offer proved to be unnecessary, for Mr. Disraeli's motion was agreed to, and alone and unaccompanied Dr. Kenealy walked to the table and took the oath.

Next day he gave notice that he would call attention to the trial of the Tichborne claimant, and a little later he raised, as a question of privilege, a charge in a speech made by Mr. Evelyn Ashley, in which he stated that Dr. Kenealy had put a witness in the box whom he knew to be false. Mr. Ashley said that though he used the words hastily, he was speaking from facts within his knowledge as a member of the Oxford circuit, and added that he who sought redress should come into court with clean hands. Mr. Lowe pointed out that these privilege cases were becoming serious, and warned members that if they were to take notice of all the strong language outside they would be embarking on a dangerous course. He advised the House not to treat this as a privilege case, and Mr. Disraeli adopted the same view. A charge, he said, to constitute a case of privilege, must be made against a member in his capacity as a member of the House. No doubt the charge made against Dr. Kenealy by the hon. member was a disgraceful one, but, much to the amusement of the House, he advised him to seek his remedy in a court of law. Dr. Kenealy was greatly annoyed at the course taken by the leaders of the two parties. With singular audacity he told them that they were introducing into the country the rowdyism of the United States, and added that he had no respect for the courts of law. Mr. Disraeli, he said, was ignorant of the rules of the House, but the doctor handsomely excused him on the ground that he had all his life been engaged in writing poetical fiction and romantic fables.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

He hoped to be a member of the House long enough to live down these charges, and then he broke out into this wonderful piece of rhetoric: "I shall shake them off as the lion shakes the dewdrops from its mane." The doctor himself was genuinely astounded at the universal roar of laughter with which this sentence was received. I don't think I ever heard in the House of Commons so genuine and so delighted an outburst of merriment.

On April 23, Dr. Kenealy brought on his motion with regard to the Tichborne case. It was really an impeachment of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, whom he charged with unfairness. His speech was rambling in its character, and he created much amusement when he affirmed his belief in the claimant, on the ground that "he was a perfect gentleman." To those who had seen and heard Arthur Orton, this statement seemed to be extremely absurd, for whatever may have been the virtues of the claimant, the grace and refinement of manner suggested by the word "gentleman" was not one of them. Dr. Kenealy, not without a touch of sadness, declared that he had sacrificed himself to honour and duty. Mr. Disraeli, in his most brilliant and effective style, covered the whole case made by Dr. Kenealy with sarcasm and ridicule. He drew a ludicrous picture of the Tichborne agitation and of the volcano of popular indignation on which the House was sitting. He described the charges against the Chief Justice as preposterous and absurd. Mr. Bright was not content to laugh at Dr. Kenealy. He analysed the evidence for the claimant with crushing force, and concluded with a fine peroration in which he expressed confidence in the administration of justice in this country. The motion was rejected by 433 to one. Dr. Kenealy and Mr. Whalley told for the Ayes, and the only member

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

they had to count was Major O'Gorman, who gloried in being in small and eccentric minorities.

In this session the House was engaged for some time on the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Bill. It was in the second reading of this Bill that Mr. Biggar made a speech famous for its length but for nothing else. He began at five in the afternoon and spoke until ten minutes to nine—for three hours and fifty minutes. He had provided himself with a great supply of documents, Blue books and Acts of Parliament, and it was from these copious sources that he mainly kept up the stream of his oratory. The great bulk of the members left the House, and of Mr. Biggar's colleagues of the Irish party, only a small detachment, relieved at intervals, remained to hear him. The speech was a most dismal and dreary performance, and even the Irish contingent who stayed to cheer and encourage him found it difficult to carry out that task. Mr. Biggar went through nearly all the numerous Acts of Parliament bearing on the preservation of peace in Ireland. Towards the end his voice began to fail, and the Speaker told him that he was unable to hear his observations. Mr. Biggar was equal to the occasion. He was speaking below the gangway, and he at once seized his papers, moved up to the second bench above the gangway, and, standing quite close to the Speaker, continued his observations. He was allowed to deliver his dreary and rambling harangue to its last sentence. The general opinion, at the time, was that the Speaker gave far too great licence to Mr. Biggar, and that he ought to have used what is called the inherent authority of the Chair to bring the speech to a close. I am sure that no Speaker would now allow any member to waste the time of the House in so scandalous a manner.

As Mr. Biggar will figure a good deal in these reminis-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

cences, it may be well to describe what manner of man he was. He was an Ulsterman, probably of Scottish descent, and a Nationalist of the most extreme type. As a bacon and provision merchant he had accumulated a modest fortune, and he devoted his later years to the Irish cause. He was a short, thick-set man, with a large hump on his back. He was not short enough to be described as a dwarf, and yet he had some of the impish love of mischief and the malicious temper which are associated with men of diminutive stature and deformed body. He had no graces of oratory, but he was frank, often offensive, and sometimes brutal in his speech. On one occasion he suggested that Mr. Herbert Gladstone should have the reversion of the office of public hangman, and on another occasion he expressed his belief that when Mr. Forster went to Ireland as a young man to help the people in the time of the famine, he did so not from motives of humanity, but in order to enjoy the sufferings of the people. He was not deficient in a sense of humour. When he succeeded, as he often did, in successfully obstructing business or thwarting a minister, a smile of pleasant satisfaction would play on his countenance. Standing with his thumbs in his waistcoat, he addressed the House with the utmost confidence, and the more he wearied and offended it the greater was his enjoyment. Mr. Biggar had one great Parliamentary maxim on which he always acted. "Speak only in Government time and then speak as often and as long as possible." His friends said that privately he was a genial and companionable man. Disliked as he was in the House, he was popular with his own party, so that he must have had some good qualities; but bacon and not politics was the sphere for which nature had fitted him. It was in the debate on this Bill that Major O'Gorman revealed him-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

self as a "die hard." "If the liberties of my country, are to be taken away by a despotic and insolent majority," said the Major, in tones of thunder, "these liberties shall die hard."

On a later day, in the same Bill, Mr. Parnell made his maiden effort in the House. Like the first speeches of other men who have come to play a great part in affairs, it was a complete failure. I remember well Mr. Butt trying to cheer on his new recruit, but it was no use. Mr. Parnell hesitated, stuttered and stammered, and finally sat down, evidently with much of what he intended to say undelivered. He seemed to be suffering from House of Commons fright; but if that were so I need not say it was a disease from which he rapidly and completely recovered. Mr. Parnell never became a great parliamentary speaker, but he soon learned to address the House with clearness, force and confidence. He could always, when he desired it, make his meaning clear, and he could talk against time with skill and plausibility. His manner was generally cool and collected. Sometimes it was icily cold, but there were occasions when he flamed up with indignation and spoke with passionate force and earnestness. His parliamentary success was due not to speech, but to determination, firmness, unconquerable will, and, above all, to the despotic command which he exercised over a docile party. He had also a great faculty of silence. He had no love of speaking for its own sake, and he probably found at times that a policy of taciturnity and reserve added to his influence and authority. It helped to procure him a reputation for wisdom, for the less a politician speaks the fewer blunders he is likely to make. Mr. Parnell was often away from the House, much to the annoyance of his party, and his absence on some of these occasions was probably due to his belief

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that silence was the better part of prudence. His character was somewhat of an enigma. He was profoundly ignorant of Irish history. His patriotism was not founded on the centuries of wrong which have fed and nourished the national aversion to British rule in Ireland. Whether he could be called a great statesman is at least open to doubt. Some of the men who were associated with him did not rate his abilities very highly. According to Mr. Barry O'Brien, Mr. Gladstone said of Mr. Parnell, "His knowledge seemed small—I never saw a sign of his knowing Irish history." He never made a speech which showed the higher order of statesmanship. Talk about the abolition of landlordism and the concession of national self-government in Ireland had been commonplaces of Irish politics for many years, and above these Mr. Parnell hardly ever rose. He never produced any plan of Home Rule. He shrank from its difficulties, and Mr. Gladstone would have probably stood on stronger ground in 1886 if he had required of Mr. Parnell his scheme for settling the Irish question before he attempted to deal with it. If Mr. Parnell had been a man of high mind and lofty spirit he would not have tolerated the brutalities of Biggar. The one mark of greatness which he showed was the subjection in which he held his party, and he had only to tell Mr. Biggar to obey or go. His conduct after the divorce trial showed singular want of judgment and amazing recklessness. A temporary retirement in all likelihood would have been followed by his restoration to the position of leader with increased power and authority. But apparently he was afraid that if he once allowed the sceptre to pass from his hands he would never regain it. His revelation of the confidential conversations which he had with Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden was an unpardonable breach of good

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

faith and showed a somewhat loose standard of honour. On the other hand, judges so competent as Mr. Gladstone and Lord Morley had a high opinion of Mr. Parnell's capacity. Mr. Gladstone told Mr. Barry O'Brien that on the list of Irish patriots he would place him with or next to O'Connell. "It was," Mr. Gladstone went on to say, "impossible to transact business with a more satisfactory man. He took such a grasp of the subject in hand, and was so quick, and treated the matter with so much clearness and brevity. It was an intellectual treat to do business with Parnell." In his *Life of Gladstone*, Lord Morley takes pretty much the same view. Writing of Parnell's speech on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, he says, "It was the utterance of a statesman with his eye firmly fixed on the actual circumstances of the nation for whose government this Bill would make him responsible. His speech seems to make even able disputants on either side look little better than amateurs."

In April 1875, a debate on horse-breeding was coming on in the House of Commons. The Prince of Wales and several peers interested in the question had come down to hear it. Mr. Biggar thought that this was an excellent opportunity for clearing the galleries, and he accordingly espied strangers. It was not that he had any desire that the subject of horse-breeding should be discussed with closed doors. It was merely that he saw a good opportunity for inflicting a little annoyance on a number of people, some of them of distinguished rank, though he professed that his object was to call attention to the relation of Parliament and the Press. Strangers had, of course, to withdraw, and the Prince of Wales among the others had to clear out. The action of Mr. Biggar led to an animated discussion with closed doors, and it was on this occasion that Mr. Bryan, one

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the Irish members, was said to have declared that they were "gentlemen first and Nationalists afterwards." In the end, strangers were readmitted and the discussion on horse-breeding proceeded. Mr. Chaplin then, as now, was in favour of protection—that is to say, of taking steps to prevent the best of our horses from being sent abroad. Mr. Gerard Sturt, afterwards Lord Allington—a member who spoke rarely but always spoke well—was in favour of free trade in horses. He made excellent fun of Mr. Chaplin. His hon. friend, he said, might find some difficulty in mounting himself, but then he must bear in mind that he happened to be a remarkably fine specimen of mankind. He defied any one to look at his hon. friend without coming to the conclusion that Nature had bestowed on him her choicest embellishments, but if his hon. friend, said Mr. Sturt, amidst much laughter, wanted to be mounted in a way worthy of his magnificent person, he must pay for it, and he knew no one more capable of writing a fat cheque. The squire, as Mr. Chaplin is now called, never received a more handsome compliment. For himself, Mr. Sturt welcomed the foreigner, and said to him, "Illustrious stranger, the more you bid for my horses, my mares, and my foals, the better I shall like you."

Mr. Newdegate and Mr. Whalley, in the 'sixties and 'seventies, were the great champions of Protestantism. Mr. Newdegate was solemn, sincere, if a little fanatical, and no one could doubt his earnestness or his honesty. He was a country gentleman of the best type, a strong Churchman, and one of the most famous riders to hounds in his day. Mr. Whalley was equally honest and earnest, but, unfortunately, he never touched any subject which he did not make more or less ridiculous. In the course of a debate in July 1875, on business, Mr. Whalley

92

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

complained that he would be deprived of the opportunity of raising the question of the Jesuits because the hon. member who had promised to second the motion had run away. Mr. Disraeli told the hon. gentleman that he had recently been reading a book about the Jesuits in which it was said that they were in the habit of sending out a lay brother to abuse the Order. The suggestion that Mr. Whalley was a lay brother of the Jesuits created much amusement; but the hon. gentleman looked painfully horrified at the idea. I don't know whether Mr. Disraeli's remark stuck on the mind of Mr. Newdegate, but in later years that gentleman felt that his association with Mr. Whalley did the interests of Protestantism no good. Indeed, he began to suspect the genuineness and good faith of his ally. Mr. Whalley's efforts to serve the Protestant cause so invariably invested it with ridicule that Mr. Newdegate was driven—so it was whispered—to the painful conclusion that his ally was a disguised agent of the Jesuits.

On July 22, 1875, Mr. Disraeli made a statement on the subject of public business in the course of which he announced the abandonment of the Merchant Shipping Bill, which had been brought in in the interests of the seamen of the mercantile marine. This statement threw Mr. Plimsoll into a state of great excitement. He rose and, speaking with passionate earnestness, besought the Prime Minister not to consign thousands of men "to undeserved and certain death." He spoke of the murderous tendencies of shipowners inside and outside the House, and said that they had neither the love nor the fear of God in their hearts. He gave notice of questions with regard to certain shipowners, one of whom was Sir E. Bates, then a member of the House, and added that he was determined to unmask the villains who were sending brave men to their death.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

All this was delivered in a voice tremulous with feeling and pitched in a very high note. His language naturally produced strong and indignant protests from members of the House, and especially from the gentlemen at whom it was aimed, and the Speaker hoped that the hon. member did not mean to apply it to any member of the House. With great passion and in a voice which almost rose to a shriek, Mr. Plimsoll declared that he did mean to apply it to members of the House. This, of course, made matters worse. Cries of "Order" and "Withdraw" came from all parts of the Chamber. Mr. Plimsoll, in his eagerness, had advanced into the centre of the floor, but some of his friends succeeded in inducing him to take his seat on the bench below the gangway. A cluster of members gathered round him, apparently urging him to abandon his charges and endeavouring to calm his excited feelings. In such a state of mind no one knew what he might say or do next, and the House itself did not know what to do with him. In the midst of the noise and tumult he rose from his seat, advanced to the table, and laid on it what he called a protest. He spoke and gesticulated with great violence; but little of what he said could be heard. He shook his fist either at the occupants of the Treasury bench or at Sir E. Bates, the well-known shipowner, who was sitting on the bench behind ministers. For a moment it seemed as if he might proceed to physical violence. He tossed the paper which he had in his hand on the table, and then, in a bitterly sarcastic tone, said that he was ready to submit himself to the judgment of the House. He continued to stand at the table, seemingly expecting or waiting for a rebuke from the Speaker. There were cries of "Chair, chair," and "Seat, seat," but to these Mr. Plimsoll paid no attention. Mr. Disraeli then rose and

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

described the conduct of the hon. gentleman as most violent and offensive. He proposed that the Speaker should reprimand him, and the suggestion met with general approval.

Mr. Plimsoll now resumed his seat, and the Speaker said that it would be in accordance with practice that he should be heard and then withdraw. The hon. gentleman was evidently determined that the opportunity should not be lost. He stalked down the floor, and when he reached the bar he turned round and said in a voice that almost reached a scream, "Thousands of men will die for this." Some of the members near him endeavoured, but in vain, to pacify him. He brought his fist again into play, and shook it angrily at the member for Plymouth. The House was unwilling to proceed to extremities with the member for Derby, and any action in regard to his conduct was postponed. What would have happened if the Speaker had named him it is difficult to say, for in those days no specific penalty followed naming. In the end he escaped without the rebuke which the Prime Minister had proposed. After an interval for reflection Mr. Plimsoll withdrew the unparliamentary language which he had used, but he declared that he would not abandon his statement of facts. The House was not disposed to inquire too curiously how far Mr. Plimsoll's "facts" were in themselves an imputation on one or more of its members. It was glad to get out of an unpleasant position, and Mr. Plimsoll's apology was accepted. An inquiry was, however, made into the charges made against Sir E. Bates, and the House passed a resolution to the effect that no stain rested on his character in consequence of the statements of Mr. Plimsoll, or, in other words, that they were unfounded.

CHAPTER XII

1876

WHEN the session of 1876 opened Mr. Disraeli's Administration stood in undiminished authority and strength; but before its close its position was to be severely tried and considerably weakened. It opened with a wretched conflict on the Royal Titles Bill and it ended amidst the gathering clouds of the Eastern question. The Royal Speech, after stating that at the time that the direct government of the Indian Empire was transferred to the Crown, no formal addition was made to the style and title of the sovereign, announced that a Bill would be introduced "for supplying the omission." Mr. Disraeli brought in the Bill on February 17. He stated that when the government of India was transferred to the Crown the question of giving a new title to the sovereign was discussed, but was then relinquished for reasons which he did not state. The theme was a tempting one for the imaginative mind of the Prime Minister, but he did not indulge in any Oriental frippery or allow his eloquence to be coloured by the gorgeous East. He spoke of the number of Indian peoples, some of them highly gifted, and many of them of great antiquity; and said that there were sovereign princes in India whose thrones were filled by their ancestors when Britain was still a Roman province. He stated that the Bill authorised Her Majesty to make an addition to her title; but, much to the surprise of the House, did not say what the title would be. Mr. Lowe,

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

who followed, assumed that the title would be Empress, and he objected to making any distinction in the appellation of the Queen of England and of Hindostan, as supplanting the glorious title of Queen which had existed from Edgar to Victoria. Examining the real origin of the proposed title, he denounced the Roman Emperors as monsters of iniquity, and argued that it would be inexpedient for Her Majesty to take a title from such a source. He asked, amid a great deal of laughter, whether in India she would be called "Defender of the Faith." An allusion to the possible loss of our Indian Empire produced some irritation, but Mr. Lowe made a good point when he stated that the assumption of a new title with reference to India only would be a slur on the colonies. Sir G. Campbell, an ex-Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, was then in the House, and he explained that in India the Queen occupied the position of the Great Mogul. He disputed Mr. Disraeli's description of the Indian princes and produced such a roar of laughter as is rarely heard in the House, when he stated that they occupied no higher position than the Duke of Argyll in this country. The speaker was himself a Campbell, and this tribute to MacCallum More was eminently characteristic of the clan feeling. Mr. Disraeli was compelled to promise that he would give the addition to the title at the next stage of the Bill, and in moving the second reading, he announced that the addition to the royal title would be "Empress of India." He reminded the House that Spenser had dedicated the *Faerie Queene* to Elizabeth, on whom he had bestowed the title of Empress. As to the objection which the colonies might feel to the new title, Mr. Disraeli treated it with a scorn which must surprise and grieve latter-day imperialists. A colonist, he said, found a nugget or he fleeced a thousand flocks.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

He made a fortune and returned to this country. He became a magistrate and then high sheriff. He had a magnificent house near Hyde Park, and he had an opportunity of plighting his troth personally to his sovereign. They might have a member sitting in one year for Melbourne and the next sitting on the front Opposition bench; an obvious allusion to Mr. Lowe, who at one time represented Sydney in the New South Wales Parliament. Mr. Gladstone opposed the Bill and maintained that there was no title characterised by more glorious associations than that of the Queen. Besides, it was not true that the whole of the Government of India was vested in the Crown, and the Bill might effect a change in the status of the semi-independent princes.

The Bill was read a second time without a division; but before the Committee stage was reached the opposition to it had acquired considerable force. Lord Hartington, conscious of the strong feeling among the members behind him, attacked it with a good deal of spirit, and attributed much of the feeling it had aroused to Mr. Disraeli's desire to play the part of mystery man. The Chancellor of the Exchequer repudiated the idea that the Bill was any slight on the colonies. "Them we have ever with us and all we have is theirs," he exclaimed in a patriotic adaptation of Scripture. On this Sir W. Harcourt said it was all very well to say of the colonies that they were ever with us, but did the Chancellor of the Exchequer mean to treat India as the prodigal son. A hostile amendment which Lord Hartington moved on going into Committee was rejected by 305 to 200. Before the House began to discuss the clauses Mr. Disraeli assured it that in no case would Her Majesty be advised to adopt the title of Empress of England, and that none of the royal family

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

would be entitled to be called imperial. This smoothed the way for the Bill, and it is interesting to note in these days of obstruction that it went through Committee in one day.

On the third reading of the Bill, the opposition to which was steadily growing, Mr. Gladstone made a measured and solemn protest against it. Every man who in the last great division had voted against it had expressed a strong and conscientious conviction. This remark led to some objection, but Mr. Gladstone explained that he did not mean that members opposite had not voted conscientiously. Those who voted against the Bill, however, did so on its merits; but he doubted whether all the votes opposite expressed a strongly conscientious conviction as to its character. Mr. Disraeli ridiculed the idea that the country was opposed to the Bill, and told the House how he gathered his impressions of public opinion. He once asked the father of one of their colleagues, Mr. Walter of the *Times*, who had a great knowledge of the Press and of public opinion, how he gathered what was public opinion. He replied: "Petitions may be got up, meetings may be got up, and the country may feel a great deal without expressing its opinion either by petitions or meetings, but the way I always know the real feelings of the country is by the post-bag. I receive a hundred letters a day and more when there is anything stirring in the country, and thus find out what public opinion is from the post-bag." The Prime Minister told the House that he also received a hundred letters a day and among them was one from a young lady of twelve, stating that in a popular geography of the day it was said that "India is under the dominion of the British Crown and Queen Victoria bears there the title of Empress." Greatly to the surprise of the House, Mr. Disraeli suggested that

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the assumption of the title of Empress was in effect a reply to the advance of Russia in Turkestan. The people of India, he said, are not only well acquainted with the power that has accomplished this change; but they know also the title of the great prince who has produced it. The people who can pronounce the word Emperor will not be slow in accepting the title of Empress, and its adoption would signify in a manner that could not be mistaken, that Parliament was resolved to uphold our Indian Empire. This was a reason for conferring on the Queen the title of Empress that was new to Mr. Disraeli's colleagues, and I remember hearing that Sir S. Northcote told one of his supporters that when he listened to it he thought he would sink through the bench. It was on the occasion of the third reading of the Bill that Mr. Joseph Cowen made one of his greatest oratorical efforts. It was distinguished by a fine combination of argument with brilliant eloquence. Mr. Cowen spoke with a strong Northumbrian burr. To him, as to most men from that county, the letter *r* presented an insurmountable difficulty, but in spite of this his speech fascinated the House. He denounced the new title as tawdry, vulgar, and commonplace. The bitterest speech against the Bill was delivered by Mr. Lowe. He described the arguments of the Prime Minister as miserable, frivolous, and drivelling. Mr. Disraeli's reference to the opinion of the young lady drew forth a scornful rebuke. When they turned from the speech of Mr. Cowen to that of the right hon. gentleman it was as to the lisps of a nursery and it recalled the lines—

“My brother Jack was nine in May,
And I was eight on New Year's day.”

The growing unpopularity of the Bill was proved by the fact that on the third reading the majority fell

100

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

to 75. No difficulty arose over the Bill in the Lords, but Lord Shaftesbury gave a significant warning to the peers. He told them that if Parliament could turn the Queen into an Empress there was no reason why it could not reduce an Emperor to President.

The House had not yet done with the new title of the Queen. Mr. Lowe made a speech at Retford in which he said that two Prime Ministers had refused to propose a change in the royal title, and Mr. Charles Lewis, in bringing the matter before the House, said that the right hon. gentleman had violated his oath as a Privy Councillor. Mr. Disraeli gave an emphatic denial to Mr. Lowe's statement. It implied that the Bill had been brought in under the personal pressure of the sovereign, and that after having been twice balked and baffled, the Queen had found a more pliant and servile minister in himself. Mr. Disraeli went on to say that he had a communication to make from Her Majesty and that he could only do so with the permission of the House. There were loud cries of "Order," it being irregular to introduce the name of the sovereign in debate. The Speaker decided that if the right hon. gentleman could say that the object of the communication was not to overawe the House, he was entitled to make it, and the Prime Minister then informed the House that he had the authority of Her Majesty to say that there was not the slightest ground for the statement that she had ever made such a proposal as that described in the reckless speech of Mr. Lowe. The charge was only a piece of calumnious gossip and was not to be expected from a man of the rank of an ex-Cabinet Minister. This was on the Tuesday, and on the following Thursday Mr. Lowe made a most complete and, indeed, an abject apology. He believed the statement to be true when he spoke, but he frankly acknowledged that he ought

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

not to have made it. After the communication from Her Majesty he had no doubt that he had been entirely mistaken, and he expressed his sincere and extreme regret, as a dutiful and loyal subject, that he should have committed so grave an error and that Her Majesty should have been put to the disagreeable necessity of making any communication to the House on the matter. Mr. Lowe spoke evidently under some excitement, and it was almost pitiful to see him sitting in sackcloth and ashes in presence of the triumphant Prime Minister. He made matters worse rather than better by the somewhat servile tone of his apology. I should say that immediately after Mr. Lowe made his original statement, Mr. Gladstone wrote that he was not one of the ministers referred to. It was in the course of these discussions that Mr. Disraeli charged Mr. Lowe with ingratitude for what he had done for him. "I knew," said the Prime Minister in effect, "that not a single constituency in the country would elect the right hon. gentleman, and I therefore gave a member to the University of London so that he might find a seat in this House. What base ingratitude he has shown!" The House was greatly amused; but Mr. Disraeli was hardly justified in arrogating to himself the whole credit of giving a member to the University of London. Mr. Lowe, however, could give as good as he received, for on another occasion he spoke of the slatternly inaccuracy of the Prime Minister's mind. Some time after going to the House of Lords himself, Lord Beaconsfield created his private secretary, Mr. Montague Corry, a peer, and Mr. Lowe good-naturedly observed that for this proceeding the Prime Minister had an imperial precedent, for Caligula had made his horse a consul. The member for the University of London could, however, say things which were clever without being bitter.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Thomasson, a member of the House, was rather deaf, and he frequently used an ear-trumpet. On one occasion he moved with his trumpet close to the Treasury bench in order better to hear the minister who was speaking, and Mr. Lowe on this remarked that he had never seen a man so unnecessarily throwing away his natural advantages. The Scottish members are not generally very interesting or attractive speakers, and after a very dull Scotch debate Mr. Lowe observed that he would prefer that Scotland, instead of having sixty members, should have one member with sixty votes.

The Women's Suffrage Bill was then a parliamentary annual, and the opposition to it was led chiefly by Mr. Leatham, who made several clever and sparkling speeches against it. In 1875 he described the leaders of the agitation as women whose private virtues outshone their public ones. Even Miss Becker (the Mrs. Pankhurst of that day) admitted that all women looked on marriage either on the side of experience or expectation. The arguments of the women in favour of the Bill he described as emotional and marked by hysterical incoherency. He had been told that one of the objects of the movement was to obtain garters and ribbons for women. "By all means," said Mr. Leatham, "let them have garters and ribbons, but let us keep from them the sources and springs of power." The hon. member always held that if women received the franchise they must be admitted to Parliament and to office. On one occasion he said that a female minister might have to forgo the sweets of office for the sorrows of maternity. Mr. Smollett, whose raciness sometimes descended to coarseness, said that the mission of women, in the words of Iago, was "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer." On another occasion Mr. Jacob Bright had denied that there were different spheres for men and women, and

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Leatham in replying declared that if this were true the hon. member must be prepared with a new plan for the perpetuation of the species. The Bill was strongly opposed by Mr. John Bright, who on this question disagreed with his brother Jacob, and agreed with his brother-in-law, Mr. Leatham. It was an odious scandal to say that women were excluded from the sympathies of Parliament or that it would do no manner of justice to them. He used one argument which deserves the attention of the supporters of women suffrage in these days. The Bill would increase the influence of the ministers of religion, and that was not in his opinion a desirable result. He ridiculed the suggestion that men were tyrants and women slaves. What, he said, if they looked over the country and its population, would strike them more than anything else. It was that at this moment there were millions of men at work sacrificing and giving up their leisure and their health, sustaining hardship and confronting it in every shape and form for the sake of the sustenance, the comfort and the happiness of women and children.

Mr. P. J. Smyth was one of the greatest speakers in the Irish party. His style was modelled on the classical orators of the English and Irish Parliament, and after one of his speeches Mr. Disraeli privately said that it was worthy of Grattan. Mr. Smyth's speeches were full of passion and fervour at once restrained and elevated by literary qualities of the highest kind. He devoted himself mainly to the denunciation of the federal solution of the Irish question proposed by Mr. Butt. In the latter part of 1876 he made a speech, attacking the principle of federation, which was cheered by both sides of the House much more on account of its high oratorical excellence than approval of the views which it expressed. He declared on this occasion that he

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

would rather see Ireland asleep for another three-quarters of a century than that she should accept a scheme of federation and efface with her own hand her title to independence. It is only right, however, to say that later Mr. Smyth, in spite of his declamation against federation, changed his view and became a supporter of the policy of Home Rule.

The close of the session of 1876 was memorable because it witnessed the end of Mr. Disraeli's career in the assembly in which he had so long filled a commanding position. His last speech, made on the third reading of the Appropriation Bill, had reference to the Eastern question and the effect which the Bulgarian atrocities were producing on the public mind. It was one of the weakest and most ineffective that he had ever made in the House of Commons. Its aim was to remove or modify the bad impression created by the indiscreet phrase in which he had spoken of the reports about Turkish cruelties in Bulgaria as coffee-house babble; but in this object he was far from succeeding. He had hardly finished his speech when I received a note from the late Mr. Edward Jenkins, then member for Dundee, saying, "Dizzy has made his last speech in the House of Commons and is going at once to the House of Lords." Next morning it was known all over the country that Benjamin Disraeli, a member of the despised race, had become Earl of Beaconsfield. This was the crowning event of a remarkable political career. If anybody had predicted forty years before that a Hebrew of the Hebrews would become Prime Minister of Great Britain and take his seat among the aristocracy of the realm, the prophecy would have been regarded as the extravagant production of a fantastic brain. The reason given for the translation of Mr. Disraeli to the other House was the state of his health, and it was a

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

fact that he had not been able for some time to remain during the late sittings of the House. Immediately after being ennobled he took the office of Lord Privy Seal, mainly because that office gives a titular precedence over most of the other Ministers of State. It was not till 1905 that the Prime Minister, by virtue of that office, obtained precedence over all his colleagues.

CHAPTER XIII

1877

WHEN Mr. Disraeli went to the Lords he entrusted the leadership of the party to Sir S. Northcote, who filled the office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Some surprise was felt that he did not select Mr. Gathorne Hardy, afterwards the Earl of Cranbrook, for the position. He was a far more spirited and dashing debater than Sir S. Northcote, and could, on almost any question, rouse the feelings and appeal to the prejudices of the Tory party. Perhaps Mr. Disraeli felt that it would hardly be wise to place the fortunes of the party in the hands of a man who sometimes allowed his eloquence almost to carry him off his balance. Sir S. Northcote was no doubt chosen because he was "a safe man." He was described by Mr. Smollett, one of his supporters, as a man of great moderation of opinion, an excellent financier, the incarnation of common-sense, and without a spark of dangerous genius. This, on the whole, was a tolerably fair description of the new leader. He was not an inspiring speaker. He had neither humour nor eloquence, but he was a man of culture and attainments. He could make a clear, plain, business-like speech, touched now and again with a felicitous phrase. In dealing with great questions he rarely rose above the commonplace; but he could be safely trusted to avoid oratorical indiscretions. His leadership, which was

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

never a success, ended in failure, and was finally destroyed by Lord R. Churchill.

When the session of 1877 opened the Eastern question was approaching an acute stage, and on February 16 Mr. Gladstone called attention to our obligations under the Treaty of Paris. The debate on the subject has now little interest, but it was rendered memorable by an encounter between Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Gladstone. The Government very foolishly put up Mr. Chaplin, not then one of its members, to make an attack on Mr. Gladstone. It had been carefully prepared. It was very bitter in tone and was couched in that somewhat expansive and grandiose style of eloquence which then, as now, distinguished Mr. Chaplin's speeches. On this occasion he spoke with more force and energy than usual, and was evidently labouring under strong party feeling. He denounced Mr. Gladstone's anti-Turkish campaign in the country and abused his pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities. He declared that the St. James's Hall Conference (where, by the way, Mr. Freeman delivered his "Perish India" speech), which had been held to protest against any action of this country in defence of the Turks, as a barefaced sham and audacious imposture. He told Mr. Gladstone that he had not substantiated his charges against the Government, and that there was no course open to him as "a man of honour" but to prove them or withdraw them. This challenge was sustained and enforced by a tremendous volley of cheers from the crowded benches behind the Government, followed by an angry and defiant response from the Liberals. Mr. Gladstone rose and, evidently labouring under strong indignation, asked the Speaker whether the hon. member was entitled to instruct him as to the course which he should pursue as "a man of honour." The Speaker decided that the language was out of order,

108

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and Mr. Chaplin at once withdrew it. With pharisaical unction he went on to thank God that Mr. Gladstone no longer swayed the councils of the country. Mr. Gladstone had already spoken, but, in order to give him an opportunity to reply, Mr. Chaplin moved the adjournment of the debate, a course, I may say, which for this purpose would now be impossible. The Liberal leader at once sprang to his feet and was welcomed by the acclaiming cheers of his party. Not often have I heard him make a more magnificent reply, and yet in the cold neutrality of print it seems to have lost some of its power. Mr. Gladstone, so to speak, was on fire. His eye was flashing with indignation and his voice was tremulous with feeling. He flung Mr. Chaplin about much as a bull might toss a cat. Eloquence, sarcasm and denunciation were blended. Even the portly form of Mr. Chaplin seemed to wither up under Mr. Gladstone's invective. It was the first time, he said, that he had been accused of disinclination to meet his opponents. He denied that he had attempted to excite the public mind on the subject of the Turkish atrocities, but such was the depth and strength of the sentiment which had taken possession of the public on the Eastern question, that he had found it impossible to avoid this unexampled manifestation of popular feeling. The St. James's Hall Conference, so far from being packed, did but express the sentiments of the nation. He had been accused of writing pamphlets. Why, asked Mr. Gladstone, did not the hon. member write one in reply? The question seems a simple one, but put as it was by Mr. Gladstone, with finger pointed at Mr. Chaplin and delivered with boundless energy of gesture, it produced an effect which can hardly be understood except by those who heard it. It provoked a torrent of cheers and laughter. Mr. Gladstone went on to say that he was a simple *collaborateur* with the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

English people in the work they required him to do in the interests of justice and humanity. I have read the speech while writing these reminiscences. In the icy pages of Hansard, some of its warmth and passion has vanished, but still it is instinct with Mr. Gladstone's fire and eloquence.

It was in this session that Sir Hardinge Giffard, after several efforts, obtained a seat in the House of Commons. He was returned for the now disfranchised borough of Launceston. When he advanced to the table to take his seat he could not find the return which a new member presents as the evidence of his election. He searched first one pocket and then another, and tried the same pockets over and over again. This operation was conducted in full view of the House and naturally caused a great deal of good-humoured laughter. Though the Solicitor-General, as he then was, produced many papers from his pocket, the right one could not be found, and Sir W. Hart Dyke, one of his introducers, went off to search for it. It was found under the gallery, where the learned gentleman had been sitting before coming to the table to be sworn, and then the coming "Die-hard" took his seat for the first time in the House of Commons.

Sir George Campbell, the member for Kirkcaldy, was one of the recognised bores of the House. His parliamentary efforts suggested, as have the performances of many other Anglo-Indians, with how little wisdom India is governed. Colonel Baker, an officer in the British Army, had been convicted of a criminal offence and had been dismissed the service. He had now been selected by the Turkish Government to prepare a gendarmerie scheme for the European provinces of Turkey. Sir G. Campbell put a question regarding this appointment which contained a reference to the unhappy incident in

110

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Colonel Baker's career. As soon as the hon. gentleman rose to ask it the Ministerialists assailed him with groans and cries. In their view the question was ungenerous, and hence the indignation which it provoked. We have read of groanings that cannot be uttered; but the groanings of the Tory party on this occasion were uttered with fury and passion. The demonstration lasted several minutes and all the time the Liberal benches were silent. Usually if a member is assailed by one side he receives some countenance and support from the other; but Sir G. Campbell was allowed to face the storm alone and unaided. At last the noise subsided and the hon. member was able to explain that he did not intend to ask that part of the question which was regarded as offensive.

It was the Eastern question which dominated the session of 1877. On May 8, Mr. Gladstone moved a series of resolutions with regard to the relations of Great Britain and Turkey, the notice of which had rather perplexed his own friends. His way was blocked by a good many obstacles. He was asked by Sir George Trevelyan whether he would modify the terms of the second resolution so that it should read that Turkey had forfeited all claim to the moral and material support of the British Crown and abandon the third and fourth. To this he agreed; but these concessions did not clear his path. Various points were raised, some of them frivolous. Mr. Gladstone met all these difficulties with patience and courage, and it was his conduct on this occasion that Mr. Balfour, in his speech after Mr. Gladstone's death, selected as a signal example of his resolution and firmness in dealing with public affairs. It was not till after seven that he was able to move the first of the resolutions, but even during the sacred hour of dinner he was able to keep a full House. The speech

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

was, in fact, an historical review of our relations with the Porte and contained many passages of great eloquence. Mr. Chamberlain stated that he was in favour of armed intervention as suggested in the third and fourth resolutions. The resolution on which the division took place was defeated by 354 to 223; but had Mr. Gladstone proceeded with the resolutions in favour of uniting with Russia against Turkey he would probably not have had more than 100 supporters.

In July of this year the power of a minority under the old rules of procedure was signally illustrated. A band of seven Irish members (including Mr. Parnell), with the strange addition of Mr. Whalley, kept the House sitting till seven in the morning on the Volunteer Vote. A question was put as to the non-existence of volunteers in Ireland, and no reply which the Irish members could obtain was regarded as satisfactory. In the end the Government had to give way and progress was reported without the vote being obtained. These proceedings led to a discussion on a subsequent day, in the course of which the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave the first indication of those changes in procedure which, mild and tentative at the outset, have since gone so far. A little later in the session Mr. F. H. O'Donnell and some of his friends were pursuing a course of deliberate and persistent obstruction, and, in the course of the proceedings, Mr. Chaplin asserted that the Irish party were insensible to the feelings which governed gentlemen. This rebuke was vehemently cheered on both sides, and Mr. Parnell, white with passion, rose to order. He gesticulated furiously, but for some time not a word that he said could be heard. When the noise had partly subsided he was heard demanding that Mr. Chaplin should withdraw the phrase and challenging him to use it outside the House. The Speaker said that it would

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

be out of order to say that members had behaved in a manner unworthy of gentlemen, but that he did not understand Mr. Chaplin to say so. That gentleman then rose to explain. He did not withdraw, but he made an explanation which, in its rhetorical ingenuity, was worthy of Mr. Gladstone himself. What he had said was that hon. gentlemen opposite had shown a stubborn insensibility to those sentiments under which gentlemen in this House had invariably acted.

On Wednesday, July 25, the business of the day was the South African Bill, and after the House had gone into Committee Mr. Parnell frankly avowed that he would thwart and obstruct the intentions of the Government in regard to the Bill. The Chancellor of the Exchequer at once moved that progress should be reported, so that the words of the hon. gentleman should be taken down and reported to the Speaker. This was agreed to. The words were reported to the Chair, and then Sir S. Northcote, evidently with the general approval, moved that Mr. Parnell be suspended from the service of the House till Friday. Mr. Parnell was asked what he had to say and he made a rambling statement which was no explanation at all. He said that he had been menaced by the English Press and by the English members, and these words were, on the motion of Mr. Eliot Yorke, also taken down. Mr. Parnell, with superb audacity, denied that he had used them; but they appeared in the report of his speech, and there was no doubt that he did utter them, though they were, perhaps, a mere piece of heedless rhetoric. It was felt, however, and subsequently admitted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the words of Mr. Parnell about thwarting and obstructing the intentions of the Government were too weak to justify suspension. The debate was adjourned and the matter finally

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

dropped; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave notice of a resolution which provided that a member who twice defied the authority of the Chair should be suspended on the Bill or motion then before the House.

A few days after came the celebrated sitting on the South African Bill, which began on July 31. The House was no sooner in Committee than Mr. Parnell, Mr. F. H. O'Donnell and Mr. Biggar renewed their obstructive opposition to the Bill. Sir W. Harcourt denounced the action of Mr. Parnell as pure obstruction, and that gentleman, with an air of injured innocence, moved that the words be taken down. The motion was received with general cries of "No," and then Mr. Newdegate moved that Mr. Parnell be no longer heard. This method of dealing with the hon. member was considered too summary and he was allowed to proceed. The discussion on the Bill soon developed into mere obstruction, and Mr. Courtney, though an opponent and critic of the measure, denounced the opposition with which it had met as perfect rowdyism. Mr. Forster, on the part of the Opposition, told the Government that they would sit as long as they wished in order to get the Bill through. The House continued in session through the night and right on during the Wednesday till ten past six, or, altogether, for twenty-six hours. In the early morning Mr. O'Connor Power had accused the Government of forming a conspiracy to crush the Irish opposition to the Bill. This led to a scene of great uproar. The Chairman called on Mr. Power to withdraw the word "conspiracy," but he declined to do so until he had the opportunity of explaining. Sir W. Harcourt, speaking for the immense majority of the House, demanded its instant withdrawal. The Chairman insisted that the hon. member should adopt that course. For some time he tried to evade the

114

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

order. He attempted to explain, but his voice was drowned in the cries of "Withdraw." After a long and stormy wrangle Mr. Power withdrew the words. Mr. Parnell then opened fire on Sir W. Harcourt, and the member for Oxford, as he then was, replied in a very vigorous speech. He quoted, amidst much cheering, a declaration made by Mr. Parnell at Manchester, that his policy was not conciliation but retaliation. The discussion went on during the night and morning, and in the course of it the leader of the Irish band—they were seven all told—said of Sir W. Harcourt that he knew how to plead a man's life away. The words had, of course, to be withdrawn, though Mr. Parnell coolly argued that he used them, not in an offensive, but in a flattering sense. At half-past six in the morning the leader of the House made an appeal to the minority to give way; but Mr. Parnell's answer was that Mr. Biggar was peacefully sleeping in another part of the House and that he would return like a giant refreshed. About an hour later that gentleman reappeared on the scene and pleasantly informed the House that he had had a good sleep and an excellent breakfast. In the course of the discussions members in all parts of the House declared that such an abuse of the privileges of the House could no longer be tolerated; and that sitting, perhaps more than any other, prepared the way for effective measures for coping with obstruction. At last Mr. O'Donnell announced the surrender of the minority, and at ten minutes past two the Bill passed through Committee. The House then went on with the business of the day as if nothing had happened, and before six o'clock had done a good day's work.

Mr. Delahunty was an amusing though not a striking figure in the Parliament of 1874-80. He was an Irish Nationalist of the mild and pacific type that existed at

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that time, and his prescription for all the ills from which Ireland suffered was the abolition of one-pound notes. He raised the subject in 1877, and said that if it was deemed best that Ireland should have a small note circulation, let England have it too. In another speech on the question he asserted that if small notes were suppressed they would have a great increase of specie circulation or of large notes. If one-pound notes were abolished it would settle the manufacturing question and make Ireland as prosperous as England. Mr. Delahunty's political motto was "Ireland for the Irish—and England too." It looks as if it were coming to this.

CHAPTER XIV

1878

PARLIAMENT assembled in 1878, amidst the excitement produced by the Russian successes in the Balkan Peninsula and the threatened advance of the Russian army on Constantinople. The Liberals were afraid that the Government meditated intervention, but on the first night of the session Lord Beaconsfield announced that the policy of the Government was still one of conditional neutrality. On January 24, Sir S. Northcote gave notice that the Government would ask for a vote of credit. This was followed by the resignation of Lord Carnarvon on the ground that intervention at that moment would encourage the Turks to make a futile resistance. Lord Beaconsfield stated in the House of Lords that he saw no reason for the noble earl's resignation; but the Prime Minister and he were evidently on bad terms, for he spoke of Lord Beaconsfield not as his noble friend, but as the noble earl. Lord Carnarvon in his speech threw a little light on the proceedings of Cabinet Councils by his statement that he had been "severely condemned" in the Cabinet by the Prime Minister for a speech which he had made to a South African deputation of a decidedly anti-Turkish tone. In other words, Lord Carnarvon admitted that he had got a good wiggling, and this makes one wonder whether in the secrecy of the Cabinet the Prime Minister is in the habit of taking his colleagues to task for their indiscretions outside Parliament. Lord Derby had also

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

resigned, but as the order to the fleet to sail for Constantinople had been suspended, he withdrew his resignation. When the vote of credit came on for discussion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said the Government had endeavoured to obtain from Russia a pledge that she would not occupy Constantinople or approach Gallipoli. His speech was by no means warlike in spirit, and the object of the vote seemed to be mainly to strengthen the Government in the coming Conference. So general was this view that Mr. Bright told them that they were entering the Conference "with shotted guns and loaded revolvers." The Opposition felt, however, that it was necessary that the policy of the Government should be resisted, and on going into Committee on the vote of credit Mr. Forster moved an amendment declaring that the House saw no reason for departing from a policy of neutrality, and no reason for adding to the burden of the people by voting unnecessary supplies. It was in this debate that Mr. Bright made the speech in which he spoke of "the *delirium tremens* of the *Daily Telegraph*, and the raving lunacy of the *Pall Mall Gazette*"—journals which were then violently pro-Turkish. In the course of the discussion it was announced that the general bases of peace and of an armistice had been signed. Mr. Gladstone made a speech of great dignity and moderation, but it called forth a vehement and impassioned reply from Mr. Gathorne Hardy. He contrasted it with a speech delivered a few days before at Oxford by Mr. Gladstone. In that speech the Liberal leader stated that there was not a man in the Government who had a tenth part of the tenacity of will and patience of purpose of Lord Beaconsfield. "My purpose," he went on to say, "for the last eighteen months has been to counteract as well as I could what I believed to be the purposes of

118

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Lord Beaconsfield.” Mr. Hardy said that the right hon. gentleman had no right now to come to the House with bated breath and whispering humbleness. Mr. Gladstone, he asserted, was influenced by personal feelings against the Prime Minister, and had for years pursued him with something like hatred.

On the last day of the debate on the vote of credit, the House met under circumstances of great excitement. It was a day of rumours and contradictions of rumours—of statements and counter statements, and the final result was that the Opposition to the vote of credit collapsed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer read an alarming dispatch from Sir Henry Layard, then our Ambassador at Constantinople, in which he said that the Russians, notwithstanding the armistice, were advancing on Constantinople, and had insisted that the lines at Chekmedji should be abandoned, leaving Constantinople without any means of defence. This communication was received with exultant cheering from the supporters of the Government. It afforded what before seemed wanting, a justification for the vote of credit, and it paralysed for a time the Opposition. Mr. Forster was somewhat perplexed as to the course he should take. Scratching his head, as he always did when in doubt, he said that he thought it his duty not to oppose any further obstacle to the vote. A fresh and still more dramatic turn was given to the debate later in the evening. The Government had addressed to the Russian Government questions regarding the reported advance to Constantinople, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer read to the House the reply which had been received, as follows: “The order which has been given to our military commander was to stop hostilities on all the lines in Europe and Asia; there is not a word of truth in the rumours that have reached

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

you.” Sir S. Northcote added that though they might regret that the circumstances had been of so dramatic a character, they must proceed with the vote. Sir W. Harcourt expressed a hope that means might be taken to procure trustworthy and reliable information from Constantinople, and Mr. Forster trusted that his old friend Sir Henry Layard would be induced to take more care than he had hitherto done with regard to the statements which he sent to the Government. Mr. Gladstone suggested that the debate should be adjourned, but there was a marked division of opinion in the Liberal ranks. Mr. McCullagh Torrens, then a member of some position, declared for example that he would vote not six, but twenty-six millions to uphold the dignity and interests of the country. The Government insisted on having the vote, and Mr. Forster’s amendment was withdrawn because it was clear that it would be defeated by an enormous majority. A division took place on the motion to go into Committee, but the minority only numbered ninety-nine. The vote, however, was not then taken in Committee, but the next day the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the British fleet had been ordered to proceed to Constantinople and the vote of credit was agreed to by 328 to 124. Lord Hartington did not vote, but Mr. Gladstone went into the lobby against it. I should mention that it was in his speech on this debate that Mr. Gladstone first expressed the view afterwards condensed into the words “Hands off, Austria.” For sixty years, he said, it had been the lot of Austria to be on the wrong side in every contention on which there was a right or a wrong side. He could not conceal from himself that there would be an unfortunate temptation on the part of Austria to limit the great boon about to be conferred on the subject races of the Ottoman empire. In this speech, too, 120

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Gladstone delivered an amusing parody on the
"Charge of the Six Hundred"—

"Ring out our battle cry,
Vote us our war supply;
This must we have or die,
Vote the six million.
Yours not to reason why,
Ours not to make reply,
Yours but to say you 'aye,'
Vote the six million."

The Eastern question and the conditions of peace were the subject of frequent questions in Parliament. The great issue was whether Russia should submit the whole provisions of the treaty of San Stefano to the coming Congress. The British Government insisted that Russia should do so, and in order to enforce their views they decided to call out the reserves. This led to the resignation of Lord Derby—an event which had for some time been expected, and Lord Salisbury took his place as Foreign Secretary and thus began his long reign at the Foreign Office. On the motion for the Easter adjournment some inquiries were addressed to the Government regarding the Eastern question. In his answers the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that nothing had occurred to give occasion for increased anxiety or diminish the prospect of a satisfactory settlement. Next day, or rather on the night on which the House of Commons adjourned, it was announced, to the surprise of the whole country, that the Indian troops had been ordered to Malta. When Parliament reassembled, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked why he had not communicated the information regarding the Indian troops to the House before the adjournment. Sir Stafford Northcote astounded members by saying that it was not thought necessary nor in accordance with practice to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

give the information to the House. The coolness of this claim on the part of the Government provoked the wrath of the Opposition, and the position of the Government was challenged by Sir W. Harcourt and Mr. Fawcett. On a subsequent night the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that the decision to employ Indian troops had been come to the day before Lord Derby resigned by a majority of the Cabinet, so that the opponents of the policy within the Cabinet did not seem to be confined to Lord Derby. The action of the Government in this matter was afterwards impeached on the ground that no force could be raised or kept by the Crown without the consent of Parliament, except the forces actually serving within Her Majesty's Indian possession, but the motion was easily defeated. It was on the occasion of this debate that Mr. Roebuck was forced to cross the floor of the House. He had been usually allowed to sit in the corner seat below the gangway on the Opposition side of the House, though he had long been completely estranged from the Liberal party. When he entered the House on the night of this debate, Mr. Dillwyn and the other members who occupied the bench declined to make way for him, and he had to cross the floor and take his seat among the Conservatives. On the next night, when he was present, he took a characteristic revenge. He took his place on the front Opposition bench which is reserved for ex-ministers, not by rule, but by custom.

On March 7, this session, Lord Randolph Churchill broke loose from the restraints of party discipline and made a strong attack on the Government. His complaint, however, on this occasion, was not that the Government were too Conservative, but that they were too Radical. Ministers had brought in a County Government Bill. It was not at all of an extreme character,

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

much less so than Lord Ritchie's Bill a few years later, but Lord R. Churchill complained that it interfered with the rights of property and would injure local self-government by increasing centralisation. In this speech the future exponent of Tory democracy showed genuine, hearty, thoroughgoing Toryism of the pre-reform type. He assailed the Bill, attacked the party, and sneered disdainfully at Mr. Sclater-Booth, the President of the Local Government Board, in whose charge the Bill was. He told the Tory party that they had wallowed in a great deal of nastiness and had often seen their principles steeped in filthy pools. He asserted that this most Radical Bill was a gross desertion of Tory traditions, and, fixing his eyes on Mr. Sclater-Booth, expressed great suspicion of people with double-barrelled names. That portly and suave gentleman was much astonished. He turned round and looked with pained surprise at his assailant, but Lord Randolph paid no attention to this silent remonstrance. He objected to Mr. Sclater-Booth coming down with his small ideas and in his little way to repair the breaches in the British Constitution. The speech was received with silence on the Tory benches; but Mr. Chaplin subsequently spoke in defence of the President of the Local Government Board. Mr. Chamberlain attacked the Bill for the opposite reason to that of Lord Randolph Churchill, and complained that it was not Radical enough. It was abandoned without much regret from any one.

A little later it was announced that a Congress would be held at Berlin of the signatories to the Treaty of Paris to consider the terms of peace arranged between Russia and Turkey, and that Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Salisbury and Lord Odo Russell would represent this country. All the plans were carefully laid for an apparent British triumph at the Berlin congress; but they were

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

completely spoiled by the publication of the Shouvaloff memorandum, which embodied the heads of an agreement already made between the Russian and the British Governments. Questions were put in both Houses as to this document. Its authenticity could not be denied; but Sir S. Northcote said that, as a statement of policy, it was incomplete and inaccurate. It was supposed at the time that the Russian Government had allowed the document to be published with the view of discrediting Lord Beaconsfield. We all know now that it was due to the extreme carelessness of a high official in the Foreign Office, who, being too lazy to make a copy of this highly confidential paper himself, gave it to a typewriter to copy. The typewriter was Charles Marvin, who knew its value and gave it to the *Globe*.

Every effort was made to invest the return of Lord Beaconsfield from the Berlin congress with the character of a great triumph. It is true that he had done comparatively little to save Turkey from the consequences of her defeat, and that the artificial arrangements which he induced the congress to accept for buttressing up the Ottoman empire have long been swept away. For the moment he seemed to have achieved a diplomatic success, and he told the crowd which greeted him on his arrival in London, "I have brought you back peace, but peace, I hope, with honour, and such a peace as will satisfy our sovereign and gratify the country." I saw and watched the crowd, and I can testify that its enthusiasm was by no means excessive. Still, for the moment the Berlin treaty had increased the popularity of the Government.

In the House of Lords the Prime Minister delivered a speech in vindication of the settlement made at the Berlin congress. This may be described as the crowning moment of his career. Rarely has the head of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Government addressed such an audience. Four princes of the blood were present. It was even said that the Queen herself came down to hear her first Minister, and a veiled lady who sat in obscurity near the canopy over the throne was pointed out as the illustrious person. It is needless to say that this story was not true and that whoever the veiled lady was she was not the Queen. Nearly all the eminent politicians in both Houses gathered to hear Lord Beaconsfield. He spoke for an hour and thirty-five minutes, and it was his greatest oratorical success—indeed, I think his one oratorical success in the Upper House. It was a general vindication of the policy of the Government and especially of the treaty—"the insane convention," Mr. Gladstone called it—under which we had agreed to guarantee the dominions of Turkey in Asia Minor against attack and had acquired the island of Cyprus as a place of arms. Experience has proved that the provisions of the Berlin treaty with regard to Turkey rested on a very shaky foundation. Most of them have since been set aside or superseded, and the agreement for the defence of Asia Minor has never been more than a piece of waste paper. The one solid result of the manœuvres of diplomacy for these months of June and July was the acquisition of Cyprus, and that has proved for the object for which it was acquired to be absolutely worthless. Later in the debate on the Berlin treaty Lord Derby made a most extraordinary revelation. He gave Parliament the astonishing information that the object of the Government in bringing the Indian troops to Europe was to organise a secret expedition for the purpose of taking Cyprus and a position on the coast of Syria. This statement was heard with something more than amazement, and Lord Salisbury, who spoke immediately after, bluntly declared that it was not true.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

The directness and strength of this contradiction excited murmurs among the peers, and Lord Derby protested against the language used by his successor at the Foreign Office. Lord Granville hoped they might conduct these debates in parliamentary language, and then Lord Salisbury withdrew the words not true, and substituted not correct. He added that for this statement he had the authority of the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor (Lord Cairns), the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary for India, and the Home Secretary. Lord Derby, however, declared distinctly that he adhered to his statement. Lord Salisbury, not content with denying the statement, proceeded to suggest that it had been invented, and to compare Lord Derby (his relative by marriage) to the infamous Dr. Titus Oates. "When my noble friend speaks he has a stock of fresh revelations to make. This is the third time that he has spoken since he left the Cabinet, and on each of these occasions we have had an instalment of the fatal tale. The same objection was made to Dr. Titus Oates when he brought successive fragments of his disclosures. When taunted with the fact, Oates said that he did not know how much the public would endure." This speech would seem to justify Sir W. Harcourt's remark about Lord Salisbury's "rancorous tongue."

On July 27, Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury were entertained at a banquet at Knightsbridge, and it was in his speech on that occasion that the Prime Minister gave his celebrated description of Mr. Gladstone's rhetoric. He was dealing with the statement that the convention with Turkey was an "insane convention." "Which do you believe," he said to his hearers, "are most likely to enter into an insane convention—a body of English gentlemen honoured by the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

favour of their sovereign and the confidence of their fellow-countrymen, managing your affairs for five years, I hope with prudence and not without success, or a sophistical rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign his opponents and glorify himself ? ”

To this speech Lord Granville called attention in the House of Lords, and Lord Beaconsfield, in justifying his statement, said that Mr. Gladstone had called him a dangerous and even a devilish character. He had made the most personal allusions to himself, intended to be extremely offensive. A day or two after there was a debate in the Commons on a resolution moved by Lord Hartington regretting the way in which Greece had been treated at the Berlin congress, and condemning the Anglo-Turkish convention. Mr. Gladstone spoke in this debate, and said he had addressed a letter to “Dear Lord Beaconsfield” asking for the evidence on which he had charged him with describing the noble lord as a “dangerous and devilish character.” To this challenge Lord Beaconsfield replied in a letter written in the third person. He presented his compliments to Mr. Gladstone, declined to search his speeches over two and a half years, but admitted that the word “devilish” had not been used by Mr. Gladstone at Oxford or elsewhere. He had requested his friends to undertake the necessary researches into Mr. Gladstone’s speeches. With regard to the epithet “devilish,” he was informed that it was not Mr. Gladstone who had compared Lord Beaconsfield to Mephistopheles, but one of his friends, who asked how they were “to get rid of this Mephistopheles.” Lord Beaconsfield might assume that he had sanctioned the propriety of this scarcely compli-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

mentary epithet. Nothing came of the researches of Lord Beaconsfield's friends. The Liberal leader had, of course, never used in public the language attributed to him; but Lord Beaconsfield had possibly heard in private talk the story since published, that Mr. Gladstone had described some argument used by his Conservative rival as "devilish."

Mr. Gladstone's speech in this debate was a very great one. He hailed the Berlin treaty as a triumph for his own policy, for it would take eleven and a half millions of people out of the direct government of the Sultan. It was idle to deny that this was partition, and if it were concentration—the contention of the Government was that Turkey had been consolidated and concentrated by the Berlin treaty—they might as well say that a man who had had his limbs amputated had had his body concentrated. On the Anglo-Turkish convention he poured such a stream of denunciation, sarcasm, and contempt as perhaps no instrument of the kind has ever received. He declared that not one of the great statesmen with whom he had been associated in public life, from the Duke of Wellington to Lord Russell, would have looked at this convention. Amidst the cheers of his party, he asserted that it was intolerable that the treaty-making power of the Crown should be used in this way. Rarely have I heard a speech produce so much effect. The House was, I think, less demonstrative in those days than it has since become; but at its close round after round of cheers were given by the Liberals, who were in this manner assuring Mr. Gladstone that in spite of Lord Beaconsfield his policy had largely triumphed at Berlin. It was in this debate that Mr. Lowe made the last speech of any importance that he delivered in the House. Turkey, he declared, had been dismembered,

128

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and with reference to Greece he quoted with fine effect Byron's lines—

“Trust not for freedom to the Franks,
They have a king who buys and sells ;
In native swords and native ranks
The only hope of freedom dwells.”

In referring to the Shouvaloff memorandum, and the instructions to the British Ambassadors at Berlin, he said that the object of the authors of these documents seemed to be to put as many falsehoods into them as possible. This remark led to a rather angry scene, and in the end Mr. Lowe withdrew it. He asserted that the Government had done what it could to produce a collision between the Crown and the people. Great prerogatives had been left to the Crown because it was supposed that it would not be used so recklessly as in the case of the Anglo-Turkish convention. The Crown, he said, might cede the Isle of Wight to France behind the back of Parliament, or it might, he added, amidst roars of laughter, turn all the cobblers in the east end of London into earls. Lord Hartington's motion was defeated by 338 to 195.

It was towards the end of the session that Major O'Gorman demonstrated that cheering might become a parliamentary offence. While Colonel Stanley, then Secretary for War, was speaking on an Army question, the Major cheered every sentence and nearly every word that the Minister uttered. The Speaker called the gallant member to order, but he argued that he was not interrupting, and that he was entitled to say “Hear, hear,” as often as he liked. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that it was impossible that interruptions of this kind could be allowed. “They are not interruptions,” said Major O'Gorman, and in order to give

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

them more effect, he moved from the dim obscurity of the back seat which he occupied below the gangway to the bench above. There he continued to cry out, or rather roar out, "Hear, hear," more obtrusively than ever. Again the Chair appealed to the Major to behave in an orderly manner, but he repeated that he was not out of order, and that he had the right to say "Hear, hear," not only after every word but after every comma and semicolon if he liked. The Speaker then called upon the gallant member to obey the ruling of the Chair and apologise. The Major would do neither. "I have," he asserted, "said nothing but what is perfectly usual in this House," which in a literal sense was quite true. "I have done nothing wrong. I am an Irish gentleman, and I know how to apologise if I have done anything wrong." His friends surrounded him and pleaded with him to obey the order of the Chair, but in vain. The Speaker then named him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved that he should be ordered to withdraw, and while the division on this was taking place the Major left the House. Some of his friends explained that he was labouring under excitement, due to the belief that as an officer he was suffering from personal wrongs. Next day he came down and made an ample apology. The gallant Major was one of the "eccentrics" of this Parliament. He was enormously stout, and when excited he spoke in a voice of thunder. He occasionally used unparliamentary language and thus got into conflict with the Speaker. While he generally obeyed the orders of the Chair he did not like being deprived of the luxury of strong speech. On one occasion I recollect that after having withdrawn a word which the Speaker would not allow, he said, half to himself, half to the House, "Another adjective gone."

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

In the previous year the Lords had had a Select Committee on intemperance. It did not finish its work in that year, and it had, therefore, to be reappointed this session. The Duke of Westminster was the Chairman of the Committee, and he put on the paper a motion for its reappointment, but he could not get to town on the day for which the motion was fixed. He wrote to the Earl of Cork, then one of the Liberal Whips, to move the reappointment of the Committee for him; and this incident produced the following lines from Sir W. Lawson, which, I think, are almost worthy of Hood—

“ Said the Duke to the Earl, ‘ a Committee I want,
This horrible drinking to throttle ;
And you, my dear Cork, are the very best man
I can think of for stopping the bottle.’

“ So the Earl did the business without idle talk,
And moved the Committee instanter ;
And they all of them said they were thankful to Cork,
Who thus helped them to stop the decanter.”

CHAPTER XV

1879

PARLIAMENT met in the autumn of 1878 in consequence of the Afghan War, and it resumed work about the middle of February 1879. Early in the session we had an anti-Liberal outburst from Lord R. Churchill quite as violent as that in which he had assailed the English County Government Bill of the previous session. Mr. Meldrum had moved a resolution in favour of the extension of borough franchise in Ireland, or in other words of establishing household suffrage in the Irish boroughs. Lord R. Churchill attacked the proposal in a most outspoken speech, and declared that it would give the franchise to the most ignorant and the most idle and the most drunken people in Ireland. This sentence aroused much indignation among the Irish members, but Lord Randolph neither withdrew nor modified it.

It is now almost forgotten that Mr. A. Balfour tried in this session to settle the Burials question, then a subject of acute and bitter controversy. He brought in a Bill on the subject which came on for the second reading on February 19 of this year. His first legislative effort was not a success. The Liberals supported the Bill subject to amendments in committee, but it was opposed by Mr. Beresford Hope and the Church party generally. Mr. Beresford Hope's speech was as amusing in its vehemence as it was grotesque in its manner. He had a peculiar rolling gesticulation which gave a certain amount

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of individuality if not eccentricity to his style of speaking. He possessed considerable powers of sarcasm, but his speeches were tinged with his fiery ecclesiastical rancour. When Mr. Hope said a good thing or what he thought a good thing he gave a peculiar chuckle—it could hardly be called a laugh. It is always permitted to a member to laugh at his own jokes, but I never till this occasion heard a member cheer himself. Mr. Hope read a quotation which struck him as remarkably good and apposite, and he followed it up by himself giving it a loud “Hear, hear.” This diverting exhibition did something to relieve the tedium of a very dull debate. Mr. Balfour’s political friends were all against the Bill, and there being at this time no closure, it was talked out, this duty having been performed by the late Mr. Justice Grantham.

The news of the disaster of Isandula in South Africa reached this country in March, and on the 15th of that month Mr. E. Jenkins, then one of the members for Dundee, asked whether the Government intended to place the supreme command in South Africa in other hands, or in other words to supersede Lord Chelmsford. “No, sir,” said Sir Stafford Northcote, “as at present advised they are not prepared to adopt this course.” Mr. Jenkins then moved the adjournment of the House and addressed it amidst constant interruptions. In spite of the clamour he succeeded in giving some expression to his views. He said that Lord Chelmsford had shown great want of discretion if not absolute military incapacity. This led to a furious outburst of cries of “Divide,” and that distinguished champion of Parliamentary decorum, Mr. Biggar, asked if members were in order in continually crying “Divide.” The Speaker gave a decision which, in view of the scene which

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

arose last summer when Mr. Asquith attempted to address the House in defence of the advice which he had given to the Crown with regard to the Parliament Bill, will be read with interest: "The hon. member is entitled to be heard on the question which he brings before the House, and any interruptions are out of order." A suggestion that Lord Chelmsford was retained in command through improper influence at the Horse Guards was hotly resented. Mr. Jenkins was able after a long and almost heroic struggle to state his case. He found an unexpected seconder in Sir Robert Peel, who pointed out that Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Layard were assailed in the same way as Mr. Jenkins when they arraigned the conduct of the Government at the time of the Crimean War. Nothing came of Mr. Jenkins' intervention at this time, but later on there was a regular debate on the Zulu War on a motion made by Sir C. Dilke. The debate has now little interest, but it was remarkable for one thing, the breakdown of Mr. Lowe. He started quite easily, but the moment he began to quote documents he got confused. This was no doubt due in part to his imperfect eyesight. There were long pauses in his speech, and then, finding that he could not use his papers to any purpose, he threw them aside and tried to speak without their aid. In this he failed. His ideas got as confused as his papers. He found it impossible to recover his train of thought, and he finally sat down in the midst of an uncompleted sentence. He was sympathetically cheered from all parts of the House. A feature of the debate was a tempestuous speech from Sir Robert Peel. He claimed to be an independent member and his language fully justified that position. He declared that 1500 lives had been lost at Isandula through the gross incompetence of

134

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the general on whose head the blood of these men rested. This speech was described by Lord Sandon, then the President of the Board of Trade, as delivered in the manner of a highwayman in a melodrama. Sir Charles Dilke's motion was rejected by a majority of sixty.

The growth in the number of questions in the House of Commons is entirely of recent origin. In the 'sixties and early 'seventies the questions rarely exceeded a dozen, and when they reached twenty the number was quite phenomenal. Writing on April 7, 1879, I find that I used these words: "Probably never were so many questions put in the House as this afternoon. There were twenty-eight on the paper and these were supplemented by twelve or fifteen more." At the present time between forty and fifty questions are considered quite few and those on paper alone sometimes reach 150.

The great Bill of this session was the Army Discipline Bill. Hitherto the Code regulating discipline in the Army had been included in the annual Mutiny Bill, but when members began year after year to move and discuss amendments on its clauses it became evident that the military Code could no longer be made a matter of yearly enactment. And so the law regulating the discipline of the Army was embodied in a special Act, which, however, has to be renewed every year so as to secure full parliamentary control of the forces of the Crown. The Army Discipline Bill consisted of 178 clauses. Mr. Parnell, Mr. Biggar and others developed a great and hitherto unsuspected interest in the Army, and the Bill occupied many weary days in Committee. It was on this measure that obstruction took its most systematic development, and it brought Mr. Parnell and some of his followers into frequent conflict not only with the Government but with the majority of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

House. The Bill was considered and revised by a Select Committee of which Sir W. Harcourt was the Chairman, and it had therefore the sanction of both front benches. Some of its clauses underwent a good deal of criticism from other members besides Mr. Parnell and his friends. Mr. E. Jenkins, for instance, described clause 32 as monstrous and infamous, and thus drew a solemn rebuke from Sir W. Harcourt, who told him that in so describing the clause he was showing the temper which he was apt to betray. Mr. Jenkins replied with some spirit, and complained that the Liberal leaders were so often absent. On this occasion, he said, the front Opposition bench was a vast hiatus. They expected their leaders to show them what their views were. He described, rather absurdly I think, Sir W. Harcourt as the "curled darling of the saloons." The right hon. gentleman strolled down here and

"Assumes the god, affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres."

This was not a bad description of Sir W. Harcourt in his more majestic mood, but, said Mr. Jenkins, on this occasion instead of being Jupiter he was only Ganymede.

The most difficult question raised on the Army Discipline Bill was the abolition of flogging. A considerable party in the House was in favour of getting rid of this punishment altogether, and Mr. Parnell with great tenacity as well as adroitness fastened on this subject as one on which he could most effectively damage the Government, and most readily secure English sympathy. Sir W. Harcourt's defence of the punishment was that on the field it was the only alternative to death. This did not remove the objections of the

136

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

opponents of flogging, but it was Mr. Parnell and his colleagues who did the most to obstruct the progress of the measure. He supplemented his efforts on the Bill by talking on the Army votes; and on the vote for the office of Judge Advocate General he discussed the duties of the office, which was then filled by Mr. Cavendish-Bentinck. Mr. Parnell asserted that he had received this position as a reward for obstruction—which was at least partly true—and with the utmost gravity and without even a suspicion of irony in his voice declared that this was a most improper thing to do.

The Government soon began to find that it was a most difficult thing to defend flogging in the Army. Household Suffrage existed in the boroughs, and many of the voters were the fathers or brothers of the men who would be liable to the punishment. To advocate its retention was flouting or offending the actual electorate, and probably their attitude on the question of flogging had more to do than many people suppose with the disaster which overtook the Tory party in 1880. On June 17 the Government agreed to reduce the number of lashes that could be inflicted from fifty to twenty-five; but this concession only stimulated the desire for more, and at the next sitting of the Committee Sir Arthur Otway appealed to the Government to drop the flogging clause altogether. Colonel Stanley, the Secretary for War, had carried on the struggle with good temper. He had conceded a good deal, but on this occasion he took a firmer position. He could, he declared, do no more than he had done; and if the concession he had offered was to be used as a stepping-stone for further demands he would not reduce the number of lashes from fifty to twenty-five. Mr. Parnell offered, if the Government gave up the punishment, not to say another word on the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Bill, but tempting as the bait was the Government would not accept it. The flogging clause had been under discussion for five days, and before the House adjourned on the fifth day it had been added to the Bill. The obstruction to the measure still continued with unabated vigour. At the sitting on June 30 Mr. Parnell had spoken twenty-seven times before eight o'clock, and he was assisted in his operations by Mr. O'Connor Power, Major Nolan and Mr. Biggar. There was a very disorderly scene on July 4 when it was proposed that the "cat" in use in the Navy should be exhibited in the library. The Irish members worked themselves into a great passion over this matter, and Mr. O'Donnell declared that if the "cat" were not produced the Government would find on Saturday morning that the Bill had not advanced an inch, and he added that 500,000 Londoners would assemble in Hyde Park. The Chancellor of the Exchequer rather foolishly moved that the words of the hon. member should be taken down. They were blatant rather than unparliamentary, and nothing came of the proposal. The House met on Saturday, July 5, for the purpose of advancing the Bill, and the sitting was prolonged till Sunday morning. This persistent opposition began to tell on the Government, and on Monday, July 7, Colonel Stanley announced that the Government had decided to limit the punishment of flogging to cases which were punishable by death. This concession did not satisfy the Opposition, and Mr. Chamberlain, who had now entered into the conflict on the subject of flogging, denounced the concession as illusory. Lord Hartington thought the concession did not go far enough, but advised the House to drop the discussion till they had the proposal of the Government before them. This advice was not taken, and Mr. Bright earnestly recom-

138

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

mended the Government to give way and abolish flogging altogether. The Chancellor of the Exchequer rather spitefully asked him why he had not given effect to that view when he was in office. The discussion went on, and Mr. Chamberlain in an extremely brilliant and damaging speech reviewed the whole conduct of the Government in the matter. Between one and two in the morning came the memorable scene between Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain. The leader of the Liberal party disapproved of the action of those of his followers who refused to allow the Bill to proceed, and expressed his views in decided and courageous terms. He repudiated all responsibility for these proceedings, which he regarded as destructive of parliamentary government. Mr. Chamberlain in a speech frantically cheered by a group of members below the gangway bitterly attacked Lord Hartington, and proceeded forthwith to depose him from the leadership of the Opposition. He spoke of him as the "noble lord lately the leader of the Liberal party and now the leader of a section of that party," and told him that in the course he and his friends were taking they had the support of Mr. Bright and Mr. W. E. Forster. Mr. Fawcett came to the aid of the Government and the support of Lord Hartington. He denounced with much warmth the conduct of those who were obstructing the business of the House, and declared in spite of Mr. Chamberlain's outburst that Lord Hartington was still the leader of the party. It was generally understood that a day or two after Mr. Chamberlain wrote to Lord Hartington apologising for his conduct; but in any event the noble lord took no notice of Mr. Chamberlain's splenetic remark, and probably regarded it with the philosophic indifference with which he treated rhetorical abuse of himself.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Another extraordinary scene occurred on this Bill on July 10. The Speaker had placed an official in the side galleries for the purpose of taking notes, with the view of obtaining accurate information as to the proceedings of the obstructives. Mr. A. M. Sullivan called attention to the presence of this official, and proceeded to denounce it as a system of espionage. Mr. Callan, another Irish member, bluntly called the note-taker a "spy," and railed against his dishonourable conduct. The House was in Committee, and the Speaker was sent for. The point raised was stated, and the Speaker with great dignity and emphasis declared that the act which the hon. gentlemen had denounced had been done by his authority—a statement followed by prolonged cheering from all parts of the House. The notes taken by the official in the galleries were, the Speaker explained, merely fuller than appeared in the votes. He had noticed unexpected delays in the progress of the Army Discipline Bill, but these notes had no reference to particular members, English, Scottish or Irish. Mr. O'Connor Power rose to discuss the subject, but the Speaker told him that having been called on to deal with a point of order he would leave the Chair. He accordingly withdrew. This proceeding made Mr. Power furious. "I protest against this conduct," but by this time the Speaker was out of hearing. As soon as Mr. Raikes, the Chairman of Committees, had again taken the Chair, Mr. Power moved that progress should be reported, and attacked the conduct of the Speaker, whose ruling on the matter he impugned. Both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Hartington said that if this was to be done it should be done by motion in the full House. Mr. Parnell stood by Mr. Power, and went so far as to say that it was "a question of breach

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of privilege by the Speaker of the House." There were loud and angry cries of "Order," but Mr. Parnell calmly and stolidly declared that the Speaker was the servant of the House, and added that it was possible to call in question any of his rulings. The hon. member was technically right, and this formed the strength of his position. He insisted that before the practice of note-taking was adopted they ought to have the opinion of the House upon it, and in the end it was arranged that the question should be raised next day. Accordingly, when it came on at the succeeding sitting of the House, Mr. Parnell moved a resolution declaring that the practice of employing a clerk of the House to take notes was without precedent in the customs and usages of Parliament and a breach of the privileges of the House. Sir S. Northcote met this motion with an amendment endorsing the action of the Speaker, and declaring that he was entitled to the support and confidence of the House. The amendment was carried by 421 to 29. Among those who voted for the censure of the Speaker was Lord Courtney of Penwith. The note-taker, however, never appeared in the side gallery again.

The Army Bill at last got through Committee, but Lord Hartington was so far converted to the cause of anti-flogging that he suggested a preamble to the clause dealing with the matter, setting forth that flogging should not be inflicted except in cases where death would certainly be the punishment. He added that if this proposal were refused he would be free to vote for the abolition of flogging. On the report stage the noble lord advanced a step further, and he moved an amendment to the effect that no Bill for the regulation and discipline of the Army would be satisfactory which provided for the permanent retention of corporal punish-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

ment. This proposal was temporarily defeated, but within a short period its principle was embodied in the Statute Book. The Committee on the Army Bill had altogether occupied nineteen days. In the light of recent experience this would not be considered an unusual period for a large and difficult Bill, but in those days it was quite exceptional. That there was obstruction there is no doubt. There were, after all, only a small number of important questions raised by the Army Discipline Bill, by far the most important of which was flogging. The discussions on that subject, whatever else they did, sealed the fate of that punishment as part of the discipline in the Army. They made it certain that whenever the Liberals came into power flogging in the Army would be abolished, and abolished it was in 1881.

The Irish members were this year frequently in conflict with the Chief Secretary—the late Mr. James Lowther, who was probably one of the worst Chief Secretaries of modern times. Lord Beaconsfield, said an Irish Conservative once to me, has given us the best Chief Secretary of the generation (Sir M. H. Beach), and the worst (Mr. Lowther). He was personally a man of genial temper and a keen sportsman, but he held the highest and driest notions as to the rights of landlords. He half disliked and half despised the Nationalists, and was quite unable to appreciate the views which they held regarding the rights of tenants in Ireland. In Lord Palmerston's phrase, he held tenant right to be landlord wrong. He showed little tact and judgment in answering their questions, and his relations with the Irish members would have been worse had they not considered him as a jesting rather than a serious Chief Secretary. On June 26 Mr. O'Connor Power moved the adjournment

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the House, because he did not receive a satisfactory reply from the Chief Secretary with regard to the suppression of a meeting at Milltown in the county of Galway. He met with a great deal of interruption, but not being able to silence him the occupants of the Tory benches fell to talking, and in the buzz of conversation Mr. Power's voice could hardly be heard. Mr. Parnell came to his assistance, and asked whether it was in order that while a member was addressing the House his voice should be drowned by conversation. The Speaker did not decide the point of order, but he warned the House that the practice of moving the adjournment of the House whenever a member was not satisfied with the answer which he received had become so inconvenient that the House would have to consider whether the privilege should be restrained. This intimation was beyond doubt in harmony with the general sense of the House, and it clearly pointed to the withdrawal of this right from an individual member, and this as a matter of fact took place two or three sessions later. Mr. Power on this occasion took no notice of the Speaker's warning. He proceeded with his speech, which was delivered amidst constant interruptions. Only an occasional word could be heard above the clamour, and Mr. Power would probably have given up the contest had not Mr. Newdegate intervened with the suggestion that the leader of the House should take steps to support the intimation of the Chair. The Chancellor of the Exchequer accordingly rose, and asserted that at the instance of a small knot of members the House was allowing precedents to be established which would be destructive of its liberty and order. This declaration far from allaying the storm increased its violence. Mr. Mitchell Henry, Mr. Parnell, Mr. A. M. Sullivan rose in

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

succession, but were shouted down. The Chancellor of the Exchequer succeeded with some difficulty in saying that, though the Speaker had suggested that steps should be taken to restrict the liberty of members in moving the adjournment of the House, it was not his present intention to propose a new standing order. Mr. Power then finished his speech, and charged the Government with the direct encouragement of revolution and assassination. They were sending their troops to put down lawful and legitimate meetings, but he told them that the Irish people would not submit to a reign of terror. Mr. Parnell seconded the motion for the adjournment, and said that unless they could impress their jocular Chief Secretary with the magnitude of the question they would have a repetition of the desperate scenes of twenty-five years ago. Mr. Bright admitted that the Irish members had a right to complain of the manner, the tone, and the language of the answers of the Chief Secretary. He threw his shield over Mr. Power, and said that if the privilege of moving the adjournment of the House existed he did not think that Mr. Power took an extraordinary course in using it.

One of the most amusing attempts ever made at legislation was a Bill introduced by Mr. O'Sullivan for the "imprisonment of spirits twelve months after manufacture." The same member had more than once denounced the introduction of "silent spirit" into Ireland, which he said was used to adulterate the genuine article. This spirit was new, raw and fiery, and indeed Mr. O'Sullivan on one occasion said that drinking it gave the impression of a torchlight procession going down the throat. He proposed by his Bill that all spirits should be kept in bond for at least twelve months after manufacture, and everybody seemed to approve of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

idea. On this question the lion of temperance, Sir W. Lawson, lay down with the lamb of the publicans, Mr. Wheelhouse, then the spokesman of the "trade" in the House of Commons. Mr. Wheelhouse sometimes adorned his speeches with Scripture quotations, and on one occasion Sir W. Lawson called him "the Biblical member for Leeds with his bibulous following." The temperance leader said that when the Bill reached Committee he would propose to amend it by providing that the imprisonment of spirits should last not for one year but for a hundred years. The Bill was read a second time, but nothing further was heard of it. The task of locking up new and fiery spirits for a definite period after manufacture still remains for the present or some future Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Admiral Sir William Edmonstone, the member for Stirlingshire, was one of the characters of the 1874 Parliament. He hardly ever spoke, and indeed was only vocal in one respect. It has been said that the first duty of a Junior Lord of the Treasury is to make a House, keep a House and cheer the minister. Though Sir William was never a Lord of the Treasury he faithfully performed that particular function. He was in his place when the House met, and he remained till the close of the sitting. With everything that was spoken from the Treasury bench he always agreed. No minister failed to get a cheer when Sir W. Edmonstone was behind him. No matter what the subject, or what the views of the member of the Government who spoke, he found in the member for Stirlingshire a friendly auditor who was always ready to give him a cheer. I have heard the hon. baronet, when there was hardly a soul in the House except himself and the minister on his legs, gallantly sustain that unfortunate individual by a constant

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

succession of "Hear, hears." He was an eminently useful supporter, because it is a considerable advantage to a Government to have some one behind them who at all times and on all occasions is ready to give and lead a cheer. He was firmly convinced that a Conservative Government could do no wrong, and he was a particular admirer of Mr. Disraeli. Indeed, he appeared to me never to be quite the same man after his leader went to the House of Lords.

CHAPTER XVI

1880

THE session of 1880, which every-one knew would be the last of the Parliament, was opened by the Queen in person. It was believed that Her Majesty had consented once more to undertake this function in order to assist her Prime Minister, who was conscious that every effort must be made to revive the waning popularity of the Government. The debate on the Address showed that Irish distress would be a prominent topic during the session, but it is doubtful if the leaders of either party at that time realised the gravity of the position in Ireland. The most important political event in the early part of the year was the Southwark election, which led to the return of Sir Edward (then Mr. Edward) Clarke, a distinguished Conservative lawyer. The borough of Southwark had long been Liberal; but on this occasion Sir Edward Clarke headed the poll with 7683 votes as against 6830 votes given to the Liberal, and 799 to the Radical. The Conservative vote was, therefore, greater than the combined poll of the other two candidates. This success raised the hopes and spirits of the Conservatives, who had for some time been in a very despondent mood, and it seemed to show that the Government was recovering some of its lost ground. The Southwark election had a considerable influence in leading the Government to go to the country a few weeks

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

later. Soon after the opening of the session the Chancellor of the Exchequer submitted a proposal of a very mild character for dealing with obstruction. It only imposed suspension for the sitting in which the member committed the offence; but if the same member were three times suspended, his suspension on the last occasion would last for a week. On this occasion the Irish members assumed an attitude of ingenuous innocence. They objected to obstruction as much as any one, and boldly denied that they had ever been guilty of it. These cynical professions were taken for what they were worth, and Sir S. Northcote's proposal was passed without much difficulty. On March 6, Sir Richard Cross introduced the ill-fated London Water Bill, which proposed to establish a Water Trust to take over the undertakings of the existing water companies at a cost of twenty-eight millions. The price was generally regarded as excessive, but as a matter of fact it would have been much better for the London ratepayers if Sir Richard Cross's scheme had been accepted; for a greater price had to be paid for these undertakings when they were transferred a few years ago to the Metropolitan Water Board. On the introduction of the Bill, most of the water companies' stock rose from nine to twelve and a half per cent., and this on a market which had been rising for some time. Within a few days the stock of some of the companies had increased from thirteen to twenty-five per cent. It was these rises that created the belief that the prices offered in the Bill for the water companies' undertakings were too liberal.

The reception of the Water Bill was so unfavourable that the Government decided to make the plunge. A dissolution would kill the Bill, and ministers evidently thought that if it were out of the way it would not affect injuriously their position in the constituencies. It was

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

said at the time that they came in on beer and went out on water. On Monday, March 8, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Government had decided to go to the country. Parliament would, he said, be prorogued on Tuesday the 23rd, and dissolved on the following day. The announcement was not expected. The House at the time it was made was not crowded, and the leader of the Opposition was not in his place. The Liberals received the intimation with the highest satisfaction. The business necessary to be done before the prorogation was rapidly completed, and Parliament was dissolved at the time stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Liberals came back with a large and triumphant majority. Mr. Gladstone had swept the country and he again became Prime Minister, taking at the same time the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Sir W. Harcourt was Home Secretary, Lord Granville Foreign Secretary, Lord Hartington Secretary for India, and Mr. W. E. Forster entered on his unfortunate and ill-fated Irish Secretaryship. The late Lord Russell of Killowen had named him for the post and every one thought the selection a good one. At any rate Mr. Gladstone adopted it in the belief, which most people shared, that Mr. Forster would be a conciliatory, firm, and sympathetic minister. That he accepted the office with the desire to serve Ireland there was no doubt, but he was caught in the grasp of a great agrarian revolution and went down in the storm. The Government had a large and solid majority, and it seemed that for a time, at least, their path would be an easy and smooth one. Before, however, the session had far advanced they were beset with two serious difficulties. Mr. Bradlaugh's case haunted, worried, and perplexed this Parliament during the whole course of its existence. It helped to rally the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

weak Opposition and was used without scruple to damage the Government and discredit their supporters. It was unnecessarily and gratuitously raised by Mr. Bradlaugh himself, and he paid heavily for his blunder. He had himself no objection to take the oath as he subsequently proved, and there was at least a doubt if he could affirm. If he had at once taken the oath in the usual way the Speaker would have allowed no one to intervene, and probably he would have had no difficulty afterwards in passing a Bill allowing members holding his views, or any other views, to affirm if they preferred to take that course. As it turned out the law would not allow Mr. Bradlaugh to affirm, and the House was determined that he should not swear. After most of the members had been sworn Mr. Bradlaugh came to the table and said that he desired to make an affirmation rather than take the oath. The Speaker would have acted with more wisdom if he had told the hon. member that he might affirm and take the consequences. Instead of adopting this course, he informed Mr. Bradlaugh that the House would hear what he had got to say, and the member for Northampton stated his case quietly, moderately and clearly. The Speaker did not decide the question himself, but unfortunately left it to the House, and from this followed a succession of scenes which degraded Parliament, and certainly did not assist or promote the cause of religion. At this moment all the members of the Cabinet having accepted office, had ceased to be members of the House. Lord F. Cavendish, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who represented the Government, moved that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into Mr. Bradlaugh's claim, and Sir S. Northcote, who at that time had no idea of making capital out of the Bradlaugh question, seconded the motion. Earl Percy urged that a decision on the matter should be

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

delayed, and Sir John Gorst, who had no doubt caught a glimpse of how the position and claims of Mr. Bradlaugh might be turned to account, took the same view. A little later, however, the Committee was appointed. This Committee reported against Mr. Bradlaugh's right to affirm, and then that gentleman attempted to solve the question by a *coup de main*. He was quite ready to swear, and on the second day after the delivery of the Queen's Speech, he advanced to the table to take the oath. Sir H. D. Wolff saw his opportunity and rose and said that he objected to the hon. member being sworn. Some confusion followed the intervention of the hon. gentleman. Other members were on their feet, but when quiet had been partially restored, the Speaker said that the course taken by the hon. member was unusual, but that in the circumstances he would allow him to proceed. He put his objection with unmistakable plainness, for he held that Mr. Bradlaugh, being an Atheist, could not take the oath, and that to him its words would have no definite meaning. He quoted some of Mr. Bradlaugh's atheistic and republican sentiments, and boldly asserted that the oath would have no binding effect on his conscience. His references to the republicanism and atheism of the member for Northampton told on the House with great effect. He concluded by moving that Mr. Bradlaugh should not be allowed to take the oath; and Sir Robert Fowler, who seconded the motion, held that no one who denied the existence of God should be allowed to sit in Parliament. The Conservatives were delighted with the action taken by Sir H. D. Wolff, and Mr. Gladstone had never a more difficult task to perform than that which now fell to him. He had to defend the right of a constituency to choose its member, and that principle embodied in the person of a man whose principles he abhorred. The

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

question was not whether an Atheist should be allowed to sit in Parliament, but whether if a member, duly elected, desired to take the oath, there was any power to prevent him. He proposed that the question should be referred to a Select Committee. Party necessities and political pressure had changed the position of Sir S. Northcote. The Fourth Party had, if not formally at least substantially, come into being. Mr. Bradlaugh was, if not its only begetter, at least its principal creator, and the Conservative leader was compelled to dance to the pipes of Sir H. D. Wolff, Sir John Gorst, and Lord Randolph Churchill. Mr. Labouchere stood up stoutly for his colleague. He came to Parliament to perform political and not religious functions, and they had no right to exclude him from the House for speculative opinions. Mr. Bright made a strong and powerful speech in support of Mr. Bradlaugh's claim. His opinions were well known to his constituents when they elected him, and the House had no right to prevent him performing his duties. Mr. Bright said that he himself was allowed to affirm, and he added, "My word is as good, or taken to be as good, as your oath." He evoked loud cheers when he said that they might well trust the religious sense and character of the House in the hands of a minister whose devotion to the Christian faith was, at least, not less than that of any honourable gentleman opposite. It was on the motion of Sir H. D. Wolff that Lord Randolph made his first great speech in Parliament, for his appearances in the previous House of Commons had been fitful and not very brilliant. His performance on this occasion was a good example of his reckless and dashing oratorical style. It was clever, violent and vituperative. He admitted that he objected to Mr. Bradlaugh because he was an Atheist and a Republican. He was not content with denouncing that gentleman's

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

opinions. He treated the House to a rather grotesque travesty of Burke and the dagger scene. Lord Randolph quoted a passage from Mr. Bradlaugh's *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*, containing a somewhat coarse attack on German princes, and then, with a gesture of infinite scorn, threw the book on the floor of the House. This dramatic stroke was cheered by Conservatives, but it was received with so much laughter and ridicule on the Liberal side of the House, that it entirely miscarried. Lord Randolph stood forth as a new defender of the faith. Adopting the style of a Roman orator, he declared that to allow Mr. Bradlaugh to take the oath would be an "outrage on the immortal God." The noble lord, no doubt, thought that this would be profoundly impressive; but, as a matter of fact, it had neither the dignity nor the solemnity of a great appeal, and it failed to touch the sentiment or intelligence of the House. The truth was that Lord Randolph's championship of Christianity was regarded with some degree of distrust. Mr. Thorold Rogers, once a clergyman, but then out of holy orders, startled and offended the Opposition by reminding them that all the great English infidel writers—Hobbes, Hume and Gibbon—were good Conservatives. In this speech Mr. Beresford Hope gave the House an anti-climax as amusing as any I have ever heard. In awe-inspiring tones he reminded the house that they were discussing this question on the Queen's birthday. This was too much for members, who received Mr. Hope's pathetic reference to the royal birthday with a hearty burst of laughter. Mr. Bradlaugh, who was sitting under the gallery, heard all the abuse which was poured upon him. Mr. Wharton was particularly violent, and described the member for Northampton as the Cerberus of atheism, treason, and filth. The motion to appoint a Committee to consider

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the question of the parliamentary oath was in the end agreed to.

It was arranged that in Mr. Gladstone's absence Lord Hartington should lead the House, and that on unimportant nights the Prime Minister should go home. It turned out that there were very few nights of that character. Soon after taking office the Prime Minister made the second Budget statement of the year. The malt duty had long been one of the grievances of the agricultural interest. At one time it used to be the subject of annual motions; but this year Mr. Gladstone finally settled the question by turning the malt tax into a beer duty of 6s. 3d. per barrel.

On Monday, June 15, a scene of almost unexampled violence arose in the House of Commons over the appointment of M. Challemel-Lacour as the French Ambassador at the Court of St. James's. Mr. O'Donnell put a question with reference to the new ambassador, which, as Mr. Gladstone said, "insinuated a charge of attempted murder and accomplished plunder" against the representative of France. He asked whether Citizen Challemel-Lacour had ordered the massacre of Colonel Carayon Labauris in a telegram containing the words *Fusillez-moi ces gens-là*, and had been condemned by a court in France to pay £3000 compensation for the plunder of a convent. Sir Charles Dilke said that there was no truth in the first statement in the question, and as to the second it was as the head of a department and not as an individual that he had been made to pay compensation, the plunder having been perpetrated by some volunteers. Mr. O'Donnell then rose to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the matter as one of urgent importance. He was at once pulled up by the Speaker, who pointed out the extreme impropriety of the course

154

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

he was taking, and added that it was a gross abuse of the privileges of the House. This declaration was universally cheered, but Mr. O'Donnell declined to yield to the general feeling of members. He had evidently a great antipathy to the new ambassador, probably due to his republican and freethinking sentiments. He was about to proceed with his speech when Mr. Gladstone rose and moved that Mr. O'Donnell be not heard. The motion came on the House like a thunderbolt. As the Speaker subsequently pointed out, such a motion had not been made for two hundred years, and it was followed by a shout of indignation from the Irish members and a section of the Conservatives. Then Mr. Parnell—pale, and more angry than I ever saw him before—addressed the House. He disavowed all sympathy with Mr. O'Donnell's question, but protested against the evil and dangerous precedent of suppressing freedom of debate. Mr. T. P. O'Connor, while supporting Mr. Parnell's protest, condemned Mr. O'Donnell's action in the strongest terms. Indeed, that gentleman had not a single friend in the House; but so strong was the general feeling of members on the subject of freedom of speech, that they hesitated to suppress him. Mr. Gladstone defended his proposal on the ground that Mr. O'Donnell was acting directly contrary to the views of the Speaker. His question affected a foreign ambassador who came here as the representative of the state to which he belonged, and who in that capacity had certain immunities secured to him by law. The debate thus started was conducted with great animation and occasional tumult through the entire sitting. In the course of the evening, Mr. Joseph Cowen, in a speech marked by much fervour and eloquence, defended M. Challemeil-Lacour as a man of great literary distinction and political ability. Late in the discussion, Sir S. Northcote raised the point whether

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Gladstone's motion was in order. The Speaker told the House that such a motion had not been made for two hundred years; but that there were precedents for its being made in exceptional circumstances. Sir Stafford strongly objected to establishing a precedent for allowing a motion to be made that a member be not heard, as dangerous to liberty of speech. Sir W. Harcourt regretted that the leader of the Opposition had lent such powerful and influential support to the member for Dungarvan (Mr. O'Donnell). This remark was followed by a wild outburst of indignation from the Opposition side of the House. Tories and Nationalists seemed beside themselves with passion. Every time that the Home Secretary attempted to resume his speech he was assailed with cries of "Withdraw," and then Captain Price, a Tory member, in the hope of investing Mr. Gladstone's motion with ridicule, moved that Sir W. Harcourt be not heard. The Speaker took no notice of the motion, and happily for the House of Commons one original motion must be disposed of before another is moved. The Tories would not, however, allow it to be got rid of in this way, and the Speaker gave as his reason for not putting it that Sir W. Harcourt was in possession of the House. But, said Mr. E. Stanhope, was not Mr. O'Donnell in possession of the Chair when Mr. Gladstone made his motion? This seemed to put the Speaker in a dilemma. He had forgotten for the moment that an original motion must be accepted, rejected or withdrawn before another is proposed; but he was saved from answering Mr. Stanhope's question by members who raised other points of order. Sir S. Northcote repudiated the interpretation put upon his speech by the Home Secretary, and then Mr. Forster denounced Mr. O'Donnell's conduct as an outrage on the decencies of society, a phrase which, of course, he had to withdraw.

156

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. O'Donnell was allowed to defend his conduct, though not to discuss the character of the French Ambassador, and this he did with an easy audacity of manner which, if it amused, offended the House. The debate went on for hours, and late in the sitting the motion for the adjournment of the debate was defeated by 245 to 139. Then a motion for the adjournment of the House was moved and rejected. A second time the motion for the adjournment of the debate was moved, and it now being very late Mr. Gladstone assented to the motion. His object was to prevent the delivery of Mr. O'Donnell's speech on M. Challemel-Lacour, and in this he succeeded. The House had spent the whole night in discussing whether Mr. O'Donnell should be heard, and when it rose at twenty minutes to two in the morning that gentleman's speech was still undelivered. A few days later he attempted to put a question with regard to the French Ambassador, couched in language which the Speaker would not permit. Not being allowed to ask the question in the form he wished, he declined to put it at all, put on his hat and in a highly theatrical manner walked out of the House.

The Bradlaugh case came up again on June 22. The second Committee had reported that he could not take the oath in the proper sense, but, as a way out of the difficulty, recommended that he should be allowed to affirm, leaving it open to "the common informer" to test the legality of this proceeding by an action in the High Court. Mr. Labouchere moved that he should be allowed to affirm, and pointed out that Mr. Bradlaugh was elected a member of the House for his opinions on the affairs of this world, and not for his speculations on the next—a sentiment which led to angry disclaimers from the Opposition. Mr. Bright asserted that the House had no right to set itself up as having a conscience or

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

honour superior to Mr. Bradlaugh. In this debate Mr Gladstone made one of the two or three great speeches which he delivered on the Bradlaugh case. He told those who were resisting the admission of Mr. Bradlaugh that they were treading on very narrow ground. What were the prevalent forms of unbelief in those days? The forms which abounded were positive, agnostic, materialist, and pantheistic. If any gentleman avowed that he was an Agnostic or a Pantheist no objection would be raised to his taking his seat in that House, and if they limited the objection to the Atheist they were on slippery ground. He pointed out that men like Bolingbroke, who had no religion at all, were not prevented from entering Parliament, though it was then not only Christian and Protestant, but bound to be in communion with the Church of England. Mr. Labouchere's motion was defeated by a majority of 45.

Next day the conflict between Mr. Bradlaugh and the House was brought to a direct and physical issue. It was known that Mr. Bradlaugh would come to be sworn. The House was crowded and when the Press gallery was opened, the member for Northampton was already at the table. The Clerk went up to him as he always does when a new member appears at the table. What took place between the hon. member and the Clerk could not be heard; but there is no doubt that Mr. Bradlaugh said that he desired to take the oath, and that the Clerk communicated his wish to the Speaker. Mr. Brand then read the resolution passed by the House on the previous night, and said that in consequence of it he must call on the hon. member to withdraw. Mr. Bradlaugh standing at the table attempted to address the House, but the Opposition would not listen to him. The Speaker told him that the question whether he should be heard or not was one for the House to determine, and

158

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that he must withdraw while it was being considered. The Opposition felt that they could not resist Mr. Bradlaugh's request, and he was accordingly allowed to address the House. He spoke with a good deal of dramatic energy. His voice was a little loud and hard, due no doubt to his long practice in speaking in the open air and in big public halls. When he referred to the attacks on his personal character there was a strain of passion in his language, but on the whole he resisted the temptation to retaliate on his opponents. He stated his position with clearness and moderation, and concluded with a fervid appeal for justice. After he withdrew there was a long pause. Mr. Gladstone was writing with a blotting-pad on his knee and he made no sign. He was evidently determined to allow the majority to find the best way they could out of the difficulty. Then Sir S. Northcote rose and said that nothing that had fallen from Mr. Bradlaugh had altered the position. Mr. Gladstone in a sentence said that he thought it better to leave the matter in the hands of Sir S. Northcote, but added that he would assist the House to enforce its resolution. Mr. Bradlaugh was then called, and the Speaker after stating what had taken place said he had the further orders of the House that the hon. member should withdraw. Mr. Bradlaugh refused to withdraw and insisted on his right to take the oath. In reply to a second appeal from the Speaker he "respectfully refused to obey the orders of the House." The Speaker asked for authority to enforce its resolution, and Sir S. Northcote moved that the Speaker should take the necessary steps for requiring and enforcing the withdrawal of the hon. member. This motion was carried by a large majority and the Speaker again called on the hon. member to withdraw. "I submit that the order of the House is against the law and I positively refuse to obey it," said Mr. Brad-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

laugh. The Speaker then ordered the Serjeant-at-arms to remove Mr. Bradlaugh below the bar. The hon. member submitted to this show of physical force, but he had only been below the bar a few seconds when he again advanced to the table, and flourishing his arms in a somewhat excited manner claimed to be the duly elected member for Northampton. The Serjeant-at-arms again conducted him below the bar, but a third time the hon. member, amidst cries of "Order" from all parts of the House, made a rush up the floor and speaking in a loud and passionate voice claimed the right as a member of the House to swear. "I admit the right of the House," he added, "to expel me; but I admit no right to exclude me." This speech was cheered by his supporters, but the great body of the members kept shouting "Order" and "Chair." The Speaker informed the House that Mr. Bradlaugh had refused to obey its orders, and Sir S. Northcote moved that he should be taken into the custody of the Serjeant-at-arms. Amidst a scene of considerable excitement the motion was carried, and a warrant was at once made out for his committal and he was taken into the custody of the Serjeant-at-arms and placed in the Clock Tower. The Opposition, however, evidently felt that they had gone too far, and next day Sir S. Northcote came down to the House and moved that Mr. Bradlaugh should be released. The motion was agreed to, and Mr. Bradlaugh shortly after appeared and took the seat under the gallery where unsworn members usually sit. On July 1, Mr. Gladstone moved a resolution allowing any member who chose to affirm "subject to any liability by statute."

On this occasion Mr. Parnell separated himself from the Irish Catholic members, and speaking as "a Protestant, a member of the Protestant synod and the parochial nominator of his parish," said that he could not refuse

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Bradlaugh the right to take his seat in the House. The motion was carried by 303 to 249, and the next day Mr. Bradlaugh affirmed and took his seat. The legality of his right to sit and vote was challenged, and as will be seen the Court decided that he could not affirm.

Up till 1880 the Game Laws were the subject of annual Bills or motions in the House of Commons. They formed one of the most popular topics of Radical oratory, but the Ground Game Act, passed by Sir W. Harcourt in this year, removed them for ever from the region of popular grievance and parliamentary debate. I don't think that since this year a motion on the subject of the Game Laws has been brought before Parliament. The Conservatives did not like the Bill; though they obstructed it they did not care to meet it with absolute hostility. Mr. Bright told them that almost without exception the farmers were in favour of it, and it was because the Opposition knew that, that they were, while ready to delay it, to talk it out, to obstruct it, afraid to vote against it.

On August 20, Lord Hartington gave some interesting statistics regarding obstruction. The House had only been in session since May 20, and in the three months Sir John Gorst had spoken one hundred and five times, Lord Randolph Churchill seventy-four times, Sir Henry D. Wolff sixty-eight times, Mr. Biggar fifty-eight times, and so on. He pointed out that if all the other members used their rights to the same extent, it would take two hundred and sixteen weeks, or more than four years, to do the work of the session. Sir S. Northcote retorted that the performances of the Liberals in 1879 were quite as bad. On May 23, Mr. Forster, in reply to Mr. Finigan, made a statement which procured him an offensive and well-known nickname. He told the House that buck-shot had been issued to the Irish police, because its use

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

would be more humane and because it would kill fewer people. The Irish members would not admit or recognise the kindly aims of the Chief Secretary. They were at once down upon him as coercionist, and henceforth in speeches outside the House and in private talk he was known as "Buckshot" and sometimes as "Old Buckshot." On the same night there was an angry debate on an inflammatory speech made in the country by Mr. Dillon. Mr. Forster described it as wicked and cowardly, and Mr. Dillon said that he cared no more for the Chief Secretary calling him a coward than for the *Times* calling him a ruffian. Mr. Forster pointed out that the hon. member had said that cattle placed on land from which a tenant had been evicted would not prosper. The Chief Secretary amidst general cheering said that this was a direct encouragement to maiming and houghing of cattle, and the hon. member did not rise and repudiate this interpretation of his words.

The Government carried through the work of the session in the midst of constant obstruction. On Thursday, August 18, the House sat for twenty-one hours. The length of the sitting was due to the Irish resistance to the Constabulary Vote. Early in the morning Mr. A. M. Sullivan appeared in the House with a bag of buns, and Mr. Labouchere wanted to know whether the hon. gentleman was in order in eating a palpable supper. The Chairman of Committee described this point as a matter of taste and not of order. Mr. Sullivan himself said that he saw several members with something stronger than water—it might be port, whisky, sherry or brandy; "but alas," he added (for Mr. Sullivan was a teetotaler), "I can obtain none of these things."

So serious was the state of things becoming in Ireland, that the Government introduced the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, the object of which was to put a check

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

to eviction in certain parts of Ireland. The measure was denounced by Lord R. Churchill with intemperate fury, because it embodied confiscation, plunder and robbery. Mr. Forster, he said, had tried conciliation and he would end, as the Liberal party had always done, by repression. Mr. Gladstone made a striking speech in favour of the Bill, in which he said that up till 1870 legislation for Ireland had done everything for the landlord and nothing for the tenant. The Bill, however, did not satisfy Mr. Parnell and his friends, and on this occasion Mr. Mitchell Henry and Mr. O'Connor Power separated themselves from the Irish leader. Mr. Power declared that he would not be a catspaw for the Tory party, and Mr. Parnell retorted that there was something worse than that, and that was being a catspaw for the Whigs. The Compensation for Disturbance Bill led to the resignation of Lord Lansdowne, who was Under Secretary for India, and Home Rule completed his severance from the Liberal party. The Bill raised the fears of the landlords, and it was rejected in the House of Lords by a majority of 282 to 51. After this Mr. Forster stated that the Government would have to make the best of the situation, and the best turned out to be very bad.

A very foolish proposal had been made to place a monument to the Prince Imperial, who had been killed in the Zulu War, in Westminster Abbey. The suggestion met with strong opposition and Mr. Briggs moved a resolution condemning it in the House of Commons. Mr. Briggs was a man of the most genial temper, and his speech was full of historical illustrations couched in a picturesque and occasionally in a humorous vein. His gravest passages were, indeed, unexpectedly amusing, and when he was most serious the House was most lively. The name of Napoleon was, he said, odious to the great majority of the French people. If a statue

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

were to be erected in Westminster to a great and glorious man, let it be erected, said Mr. Briggs, to Oliver Cromwell. Mr. O'Donnell described this reference to the Butcher of Wexford and Drogheda in the presence of the Irish members as an outrage. Mr. Gladstone suggested that they should not interfere in the matter, but this view did not agree with the general sense of the House. The motion was in the form of an amendment on the motion to go into Supply, which was defeated by a majority of 15. Mr. Briggs's proposal thus became the main question. When it was put most of the members of the Government left the House, and it was carried by a majority of 55. This division effectually killed the project for erecting a monument to the Prince Imperial in the Abbey.

CHAPTER XVII

1881

THE session of 1881 was one of the most stormy in the history of the British Parliament. In Ireland matters had been going from bad to worse. The land agitation had been carried on with great activity and frequent violence, and Parliament met a month earlier than usual avowedly to pass special measures for enabling the executive to cope with disorder in that part of the United Kingdom. The paragraph in the Royal Speech relating to Ireland was couched in very grave terms, and it announced, as was fully expected, Bills for the protection of life and property in Ireland. Parliament therefore met under somewhat disturbed and exciting conditions. The Irish members knew what was coming, and were prepared to resist all measures of coercion to the last. On the opening night of the session, when Mr. Parnell entered and took his seat on the Irish benches he was received with a prolonged cheer from his party, which changed into something like a howl when Mr. Gladstone immediately after emerged from behind the Speaker's chair and took his place on the Treasury bench. The Irish demonstration of hostility was answered by a hearty cheer from his own supporters. Mr. Forster at once gave notice of three Bills—one for the better protection of life and property in Ireland, one for amending the law relating to the possession of arms, and one for the preservation of peace. This

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

intimation was followed by a protesting shout from the Nationalists, and as a counter-stroke Mr. Parnell gave notice that he would move an amendment on the Address declaring that peace and tranquillity in Ireland would not be promoted by the suspension of the constitutional rights of the Irish people. Mr. Gladstone's speech on the Address was very impressive and significant. He declared that the state of Ireland was a shame and humiliation to Europe; but for this condition of affairs he threw a large share of the responsibility on the Irish members. The Government, he said, had been patient beyond example, but it could no longer tolerate the present state of affairs in that country. Mr. T. P. O'Connor answered the statement of the Prime Minister in a bold and defiant speech. He told the Government that they might pour as many troops into Ireland as they liked, but that they would find the Land League too strong for them. Neither this nor any other Government could bring back Ireland into that state of serfdom from which the Land League had freed it. This language so deeply stirred a stranger in the gallery that he shouted "speak the truth and defy them"—a patriotic outburst which led to his expulsion from the House.

Mr. Parnell's speech in support of his amendment on the Address was delivered in his best manner. It was cool, skilful and plausible. He took up a position of injured innocence on behalf of the Land League. Far from being the parent of crime it had been the means of preventing outrage. Its members were exposed to threats and intimidation, and Mr. Parnell told the story of a gentleman travelling with him on the London and North-Western Railway, who said to him that "as soon as that fellow Parnell came to London the Government ought to shoot him." The hon. member advanced

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

no evidence in support of the statement that the outrages were manufactured. The Ulster Tories, on the other hand, were so incensed at what they regarded as the weakness of the Irish executive that one of them solemnly invoked the vengeance of Heaven on the Government. In the course of this debate Mr. Forster had the first of those encounters with Mr. Parnell which were next year to land the Irish leader in Kilmainham and the Chief Secretary in resignation. Those who broke the law of the land in Ireland, said Mr. Forster, had no fear of punishment, but those who broke Mr. Parnell's unwritten law had great fear of punishment. He did not charge the Irish leader with inciting to outrage, but the hon. member knew very well that the result of his action and speeches would be the commission of outrages. This language produced much anger among the Irish members : Mr. F. H. O'Donnell described the charge as base and abominable, and appealed to the Speaker to say whether it was in order. The Speaker replied that the Chief Secretary did not appear to be transgressing the bounds of order. Mr. T. P. O'Connor urged on the Chair that the Chief Secretary had said that Mr. Parnell knew that the result of his speeches would be the commission of outrage, and the Speaker said that it would be out of order to attribute motives of that character to the member for Cork. This was followed by demands from the Nationalist benches for the withdrawal of the language of which they complained, but the Speaker ruled that the Chief Secretary was not out of order. Mr. Forster said that he desired to have as little heat as possible, and he would put the matter in another way. The hon. member for Cork, with his knowledge of the Irish character and with his ability, ought to have known what would be the natural

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

effect of his language. Another speaker in this debate was Lord Randolph Churchill, who had not then developed any dislike of coercion. He abused the Government, and said that Mr. Bright had spoken with malicious glee of landlords flying from Ireland. This offensive imputation he had to withdraw. It was in this debate that Mr. Jacob Bright spoke of Lord Randolph Churchill, who represented Woodstock, as "the member for Woodcock." Rarely has there been a happier slip of the tongue. The words exactly described Lord Randolph's parliamentary manner. A day or two later the noble lord had an angry conflict with the Irish members, with whom in the later years of the Parliament he was to have sometimes friendly relations and sometimes parliamentary co-operation. He asked whether it was not true that Michael Davitt was a convict at large on a ticket-of-leave. This pointed and suggestive inquiry produced a storm of indignation among the Nationalists, who shouted "Shabby, shabby, shabby!" Lord Randolph proceeded to ask whether Mr. Davitt had not been making seditious speeches in Ireland, and whether the Government intended to cancel the ticket-of-leave. All that Mr. Forster would say on this occasion was that Michael Davitt had not broken the conditions on the back of the ticket-of-leave; but within a few weeks the "convict at large" found himself inside Portland. Mr. E. Dwyer Grey disposed of the statements in regard to outrages in a peculiarly Irish fashion. Three-fourths of them were greatly exaggerated, and the other half had no existence. Mr. Parnell's amendment was rejected by 435 to 57, but at the next sitting of the House Mr. Justin McCarthy attempted to initiate a new debate on the condition of Ireland by moving an amendment to the Address,

168

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

praying Her Majesty to refrain from using her troops in Ireland in support of decrees of eviction for non-payment of rent. Mr. Gladstone objected to the attempt to renew the discussion of a question which had been under debate for several nights, and said that if the practice were to be pursued the Speech from the Throne, instead of being a convenient, decorous and dignified way of meeting between the sovereign and the people, and opening the business of the session, would become no better than a public nuisance, and that it would be for the advantage of the country that it should be wholly discontinued. Mr. Parnell had the coolness to charge the Prime Minister with attempting to stop free discussion, and proceeded to talk on the Land question in a tone of quiet but concentrated determination. He made his meaning conspicuously clear. He avowed that his object was to abolish landlordism, "so as to unite all classes in a constitutional agitation for the restoration of our legislative independence. After that," he went on to say, "we should remain as friends of England, we should be linked with the Crown, and you would see that we were not so terribly hostile to you as you sometimes think." Then, speaking in the tone of an absolute ruler, he stated that the first person arrested under the Coercion Act would be the signal for the suspension of the payment of rent all over Ireland. Mr. McCarthy's amendment shared the fate of Mr. Parnell's, but the debate on the Address, which was almost entirely occupied with Ireland, lasted ten and a half days. It was the first round in the memorable struggle against coercion which the Nationalists were to wage with the majority of the House of Commons until they compelled Parliament to resort to new and drastic procedure.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Forster moved, on January 24, for leave to bring in the Bill for the protection of life and property in Ireland, henceforth known among the Nationalists as the Coercion Bill. He showed that a serious state of lawlessness existed in Ireland, and said that the object of the Bill was to enable the Government to deal with three classes: the old Ribbon men, the Fenians, and those whom Mr. Forster called dissolute ruffians and blackguards. The Bill suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, and gave the executive power, in a proclaimed district, to detain any person guilty or suspected to be guilty of treason, of treason felony, or other treasonable offences. He called it a Protection and not a Coercion Bill. Mr. Dillon declared that its effect would be to make the Land League supreme from one end of Ireland to the other. At the next sitting Mr. Gladstone moved a resolution giving the different stages of the Protection to Life and Property Bill precedence over all other business, and the Irish members discussed this, a mere procedure resolution, at enormous length. In the orgy of obstruction Mr. Biggar distinguished himself, and after being twice warned was named and suspended. Then the Nationalists moved the adjournment of the debate, and Mr. O'Donnell objected to the House "being deprived even for a limited time of the invaluable services of Mr. Biggar." The debate on Mr. Gladstone's motion began on Tuesday, and it was not until two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon that it was carried. On the Thursday the debate on the introduction of the Coercion Bill was resumed, and in the course of it Mr. Bright spoke. The letters which he had received from Ireland satisfied him that for three or four months the country had been going from bad to worse, and one Irish landlord now in this country told him that he was a refugee, and

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that another, who had been intending to go home to Ireland, had been implored by his wife and family to remain in England. "Hear, hear," said Mr. Biggar, with a gratified snigger. Nothing, said Mr. Bright, appeared to give the member for Cavan more pleasure than facts of this kind. "Hear, hear," said Mr. Biggar, in delighted confirmation of the statement. The Irish members, the right hon. gentleman went on to say, had demoralised the people whom they professed to defend. One of the most respected men in Ireland told him that when the tenants paid their rents they asked him to give a receipt for half the money. "You know very well," said Mr. Bright to the Irish members, "what the meaning of that is. It was that this paper with a lie on it might be presented to you, the friends of the Land League." It was on this occasion that Mr. Bright, with reference to some of the speeches of the Irish members, told the story of Mr. Liddell (afterwards Lord Ravensworth), a frequent speaker in the 'sixties and 'seventies. "He makes a very good speech," said one of his friends, "if you do not listen to what he says."

In this debate Mr. Gladstone came to grips as only he could with the Irish leader. The Bill he described as an attempt towards the establishment of private right. He quoted Mr. Parnell's incitements to boycotting. "Shun the man who has taken a farm from which another has been evicted, in the road, in the street, in the market-place—let him be looked on as a leper." Mr. Parnell for the first time seemed to cower under Mr. Gladstone's terrible onslaught. The debate went on all Thursday and Friday, and then on Monday began one of the most memorable sittings of the House of Commons. Towards midnight Mr. Parnell made a violent and truculent speech. He had the hardihood to say that he had never

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

obstructed public business—a statement which was not merely untrue but perfectly fatuous in face of the facts known to every member of the House. When the adjournment of the debate was moved Mr. Gladstone stated that it would be firmly resisted, and indicated quite plainly that the Government would ask the House to sit till the Bill was brought in. The whole of Tuesday morning, Tuesday afternoon and night were spent in the delivery of dull and tedious speeches mixed with occasional scenes. After eleven o'clock on Tuesday night Sir R. Cross asked whether a combination of members to resist the progress of business would not bring them under the authority of the Chair. The Speaker replied that such a combination would bring them under the standing order, and that he was bound to say that the course of this debate had brought before him evidence of such a combination which went far to bring members so wilfully and persistently obstructing public business within the operation of the standing order. Further than this the Speaker did not then go.

The long struggle between the majority of the House and the Irish Nationalists was brought to a close by what has come to be known historically as the Speaker's *coup d'état*. The House had been sitting since four o'clock on Monday, and after the Speaker's deliverance the debate went on all through Wednesday morning. At eight o'clock in the morning Mr. Biggar appeared armed with a great number of Blue books, and was evidently prepared to inflict on the House a speech of prodigious length. At a quarter to nine Mr. Gladstone returned, and shortly after Sir S. Northcote. The House was by no means full, but the attitude of members was grave and serious. Everybody except the Nationalists believed that something was going to happen. At

172

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

nine o'clock the Speaker, who had been absent during the night, resumed the Chair and was received with a great burst of cheering, for members anticipated, and anticipated truly, that he intended to take decisive action. He summarily stopped Mr. Biggar in the midst of his harangue, and told him in a peremptory tone to resume his seat. Reading from a paper in his hand, the Speaker announced that the credit, dignity and authority of the House were seriously threatened, and that it was necessary that they should be vindicated. He pointed out that under the accustomed rules legislation was paralysed, and that a new and exceptional course was imperatively demanded. He would therefore decline to call on any more members to speak, and at once proceed to put the question. This declaration was received with much cheering on both sides. The Irish members were not merely surprised; they were for a moment stunned and hardly able to appreciate the position. Then they broke into something between howling and growling. The division took place on an amendment on the motion to bring in the Bill, which was defeated by 164 to 19. The division gave the Nationalists time to recover from their stupefaction, and when it was over Mr. Justin McCarthy rose to address the House. The Speaker declined to see him, and proceeded to put the main question. The Nationalists stood up and broke into passionate shouts of "Privilege" and "Liberty," but the Speaker took no notice of the wild commotion below the gangway. This impotent outburst was allowed to exhaust itself, and then silence fell on the Irish benches. By a happy inspiration they brought the prolonged struggle with the House to a dignified close. Mr. McCarthy rose from his place, bowed to the Speaker, and left the House. Mr. O'Connor Power

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

with equal dignity followed his example, and so in turn did the rest of the nineteen members of the Irish party who were then in the House. Thus the opposition to the introduction of the Bill came to an end, and it was brought in and read a first time. The House had been in session continuously for forty-two and a half hours, and the closing scenes were suggestive more of the French Convention than the British House of Commons. Before the House rose Mr. Gladstone gave notice of a resolution providing that when Parliament by a majority of three to one declared public business to be urgent the powers of the House for the regulation of business should pass into the hands of the Speaker.

The House of Commons met again at noon, and there was a great attendance in the expectation that the Speaker's action would be challenged. Mr. Labouchere, who generally acted with the Irish members, asked the Speaker under what standing order he brought the debate on the introduction of the Life and Property Protection Bill to a close that morning. The Speaker, with marked dignity and firmness, said, "I acted on my own responsibility and from a sense of duty to the House." No reply that he could have given could have more thoroughly secured the sympathy of members, and it was followed by a burst of cheering which lasted for some time. Mr. Parnell attempted to argue that the action of the Speaker was a breach of privilege, but his way was blocked by an intimation from the Chair that it was not a question of privilege but of order, and could only be raised by notice of motion. Mr. A. M. Sullivan moved the adjournment of the House, and criticised the action of the Speaker with much passion and little reason. He talked a good deal of the independence and liberty of Parliament; but the majority of the

174

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

House plainly intimated that they interpreted these words in quite a different sense from the hon. member. Mr. Gladstone pointed out that for the last three weeks the minority, instead of being tyrannised over, had been the masters of the situation. Lord Randolph Churchill supported the motion for the adjournment, but his action was at once repudiated by Sir S. Northcote and Mr. A. J. Balfour, then coming into prominence as a somewhat detached member of the Fourth party. It was on this night, at the close of the sitting, that Mr. John Redmond first took his seat in the House as the member for the now disfranchised borough of New Ross.

On the next day, Thursday, there was a sitting which resolved itself into a succession of scenes of the most violent character. The authority of the Speaker was defied, and a large body of the Irish members were suspended. The House is now familiar enough with namings and suspension; but then nothing of the kind had been witnessed since the time of Pride's Purge. It had been whispered for some hours before that the Irish members intended to defy the Chair and incur the penalty of suspension. On what issue the conflict would arise was uncertain, and probably the incident which actually led to it was unforeseen. It was the arrest of Michael Davitt that drove the Irish party mad with passion. As soon as the questions on the paper were over Mr. Parnell asked the Home Secretary whether it was true that Michael Davitt had been arrested. Sir W. Harcourt simply replied that it was true that Davitt, who was at large on a ticket-of-leave, had been re-arrested. The announcement was received with general cheering and angry cries of "Shame" from the Irish members, who were evidently in a state of intense exasperation. Immediately after Mr. Gladstone rose

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

to move his resolution with regard to the public business. He had not completed his first sentence when Mr. Dillon stood up, and, folding his arms across his breast, said, "I rise to a point of order." The Speaker did not call upon him, and it was evident that as Mr. Gladstone had not uttered a complete sentence no point of order could have arisen. The Speaker would not therefore allow Mr. Dillon to intervene. That gentleman, with an expression of grim determination on his face, continued standing and attempted to address the House. Deafening cries of "Order" and "Chair" came from both sides of the House. The Irish members encouraged Mr. Dillon by their cheers and by shouts of "Go on," "Don't sit down." Mr. Gladstone, who had been standing at the table all this time, sat down, and the Speaker, in a loud and peremptory voice, called on Mr. Dillon to resume his seat. Mr. Dillon did not obey, and repeated, so far as could be heard, that he rose to a point of order. Mr. Gladstone again stood up to address the House, and a scene of still wilder confusion and commotion followed. At last the Speaker rose, and, telling Mr. Dillon that he had disregarded the authority of the Chair, named him for that offence. Whether amidst the noise and the shouting Mr. Dillon heard the statement of the Speaker is doubtful. It was but partially heard by the House, and it was only when Mr. Gladstone moved that Mr. Dillon be suspended from the service of the House and the Speaker put the question that members generally understood the position. Then a division was called. The Irish members were in perplexity as to what they should do. Some cried "Don't divide," "Sit still," which was then, though it is not now, a parliamentary offence; but in the end they went into the lobby and the motion was carried by 395 to 33.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Dillon again attempted to address the House, but the Speaker told him that he could not be allowed to speak and that he must withdraw. Mr. Dillon respectfully declined amidst the cheers of his compatriots, who seemed to think they could successfully resist the decision of the House. They were soon undeceived. The Speaker instructed the Serjeant-at-arms to remove Mr. Dillon, and that functionary proceeded to the bench where the hon. member sat and asked him to leave. He refused. The Serjeant-at-arms then motioned to five officers of the House who were standing below the bar, and they proceeded to the bench where Mr. Dillon sat. He did not carry physical resistance further. "If you force me I will go," he said, and then he rose and left amid the exulting cheers of the majority.

Mr. Gladstone again stood up to resume or rather to begin his speech, but Mr. Parnell at once jumped up and moved that Mr. Gladstone be not heard. The Speaker declared that Mr. Gladstone was in possession of the House, and told Mr. Parnell that if he persisted in a course of wilful and persistent obstruction he would be named. The Irish leader shouted in angry and passionate tones that he would persist in his motion, and thereupon the Speaker named him. Mr. Gladstone then moved the suspension of the member for Cork, and on the division being called the Irish members sat in their places and declined to vote. The Chief Government Whip, Lord R. Grosvenor, informed the Speaker that a certain number of members refused to go into the lobby. The division proceeded, and the motion was carried by 405 to 7. Mr. Parnell was ordered to withdraw, but, following Mr. Dillon's example, he required the show but only the show of force. The Speaker then warned the Irish members that in refusing to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

divide they had been disregarding the authority of the Chair, but at that moment took no further action. No sooner had Mr. Gladstone risen to speak than Mr. Finigan, one of the most obscure of the Irish group, moved that he should not be heard. The same comedy was re-enacted as in the case of Mr. Parnell. Mr. Finigan was named and suspended; but in the division the Irish members again refused to take any part. The House was now thoroughly aroused and determined.

The Nationalists evidently intended to get suspended one by one; but it was felt that this process was too dilatory, and the Speaker decided to proceed in a more prompt and effective manner. Mr. Milman, one of the clerks of the House, took the names of the twenty-nine Irish members then sitting below the gangway, and Mr. Gladstone moved that they should be suspended *en bloc*. The motion was carried by 410 to 6. They were then ordered to withdraw, and they did so on the formal application of force. The suspension of thirty-one Irish members had not, however, exhausted the forces of obstruction. Two of them, Mr. Kelly and Mr. O'Donnell, were not in the House at the time when their colleagues were suspended, and they could not, of course, permit themselves to escape the glory of suspension. They both committed the necessary offence, and were in due course suspended. The Irish members had, however, in a fit of passion overreached themselves. Mr. Gladstone's resolution establishing a new procedure was adopted before the close of the sitting, and all means of effective resistance to the future course of the Coercion Bill was destroyed.

The late Lord Young, who in the early 'seventies was Lord Advocate, happened to be in London when these incidents took place. It was at this time that Captain Boycott, whose property was in the neighbourhood of

178

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Lough Mask, was subjected to that kind of pressure which added a new word to the English language. Lord Young was asked what he thought of Mr. Brand's coup, and his answer was that he thought "Branding better than Boycotting." The Scottish judge had a pretty wit, and it was he who described Mr. James Baird's gift of £500,000 to the Church of Scotland as the heaviest fire premium ever paid.

In the debate on the second reading of the Bill Mr. John Redmond made his maiden speech. He had taken his seat on the previous Wednesday, and was suspended on Thursday, and these incidents formed the main topics of his address. The Bill was attacked in an address of great oratorical power by Mr. Joseph Cowen. If the head of the Government were an angel and his colleagues saints he would not entrust them with the administration of the Act. He knew no meaner incident in modern history than the arrest of Michael Davitt, whom he was proud to call his friend. The second reading was carried by an enormous majority, and the Committee stage of the Bill was conducted under stringent rules framed by the Speaker. The Arms Bill was in charge of Sir W. Harcourt, and in introducing it he referred to Mr. Parnell, who had gone to Paris. He suggested that the hon. member advised the people not to pay rent one day, recanted that advice the next, and disappeared the day after. He compared him to Bon Jean in Canning's squib—

" Bon Jean was a gallant Captain,
In battle much delighting ;
He fled full soon on the first of June,
And bade the rest keep fighting."

Mr. O'Donnell explained that Mr. Parnell was absent on a mission confided to him by the Irish party, and was

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

enlightening continental Europe on the falsehood of Liberalism in place.

In the debate on the second reading of the Arms Bill Mr. Dillon made a speech which attracted great attention in the House, and which did no good but on the contrary much harm to the Irish cause. He said that if he were a farmer and people came on his land to evict him he would shoot as many of them as he could. He went on to say that he wished they had the means of raising civil war in Ireland. Sir W. Harcourt denounced this as the language of treason and assassination, and said that they had the doctrine of the Land League expounded by the man who had authority to explain it. He told the Irish members that if they did not disavow the sentiments of the hon. member the Land League must stand condemned by all Christian and honest men. Mr. Healy charged Sir W. Harcourt with stating what was not true, and, having after being warned repeated the charge in a somewhat different form, was named and suspended. On a subsequent day Mr. Parnell admitted that Mr. Dillon's remark was unhappy. Lord R. Churchill in a lively speech in one of these debates attacked the Government. The Chief Secretary, he said, had acted as the heavy father with a rod in his hand and a tear in his eye in the drama of Irish Coercion; while Sir W. Harcourt acted the more heartless part of Lothario, stamping upon and denouncing these young Irish affections which he and his colleagues had sacrificed so much to woo and win. But though Lord Randolph attacked the Government he supported their measures. Sir W. Harcourt described Lord R. Churchill as the chief performer in a screaming farce, and said that it was difficult to treat him as a serious politician. The noble lord, he said, had already dissolved the Fourth

180

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

party, and his feats in that respect afforded another proof of the infinite divisibility of matter.

For a time the House was left free of the Irish question, but this was only to find itself once more in trouble over the Bradlaugh case. I should mention that in March the Opposition proposed a vote of censure on the Government for withdrawing from Afghanistan, and that in this debate the sons of the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition made their maiden speeches. Mr. Henry Northcote spoke in support of the motion, and Mr. Herbert Gladstone against it. The speech of the latter gave high promise, and indeed young Mr. Gladstone displayed a vigour and eloquence which promised well for his subsequent parliamentary career.

During the struggles over the Coercion Bill the Prime Minister promised that a new Irish Land Bill would be introduced, to meet the cases of agrarian wrong on which the Nationalists so often dwelt. The Bill was founded on the report of a Commission, and it established what was then known as the three F's: fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale. It was in his speech on the introduction of this Bill that Mr. Gladstone used a phrase which has often been misquoted. He did not himself say that political economy had been banished to Saturn. Referring to the report of Mr. Bonamy Price, one of the Commission to inquire into the Land question, he said that that gentleman had had the resolution to apply, in all their unmitigated rigour, the principles of abstract political economy exactly as if he had been proposing to legislate for the inhabitants of Saturn or Jupiter. The Bill cost the Cabinet the Duke of Argyll, who would not accept its principles, and who after this steadily moved away from the stream of modern Liberalism.

Lord Randolph Churchill was in one sense the most

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

conspicuous figure in the 1880 Parliament. It was during its progress that he rose to fame, and brushing aside the older and more cautious chiefs of the Tory party established himself as its real leader in the House of Commons. If he had come from the bottom instead of the top of the social scale he would have been called an adventurer; but, belonging to one of the great Tory houses, he was hailed by many Conservatives as a born statesman and the coming saviour of the party. Throughout the course of the Parliament he was constantly attacking Mr. Gladstone as Disraeli attacked Peel, and when not engaged with the Prime Minister he was assailing his own leaders, "those blameless and respectable gentlemen" as he once called them.

A man of medium height, he had a keen and clever face, suggestive however rather of an alert than a powerful intellect. He had what his son called a martial moustache, which he often pulled in moments of excitement and absorption. If Mr. Gladstone or his Government could have been hurled from power by mere vigour and variety of abuse they would have been driven out of office long before 1885. From the first Lord Randolph cultivated a trenchant and reckless style of address, and it was his success in this kind of speech that gave him his power over popular audiences. Public meetings relish oratory which is hot and strong. A stinging phrase is more effective than a solid argument, and gatherings of this character are not so critical as the House of Commons. He looked more at broad and sweeping statements than a strict regard to facts. Mr. Gladstone on one occasion said that he was habitually reckless and rash in his assertions, and no one who heard his speeches in those years could question the truth of the statement.

Lord R. Churchill was undoubtedly a great master

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of invective. It was often, however, rather coarse in texture, and sometimes declined into mere vituperation. To call the Gladstone Government of 1880 a fraud and imposture and to describe the Radical party as a humbug afforded a momentary gratification to the Conservatives; but something more than mere strength of language is required to give rhetoric of this kind real distinction. Oratorical invective should have a seasoning of wit, and its literary form should be terse and polished. Lord Salisbury was a great parliamentary critic, but a high authority declared that his invective was wanting in finish. Much more so was Lord Randolph Churchill's. Still, his speeches from 1880 to 1885 are a rich treasury of personal and political abuse. He had not a great sense of humour, though sometimes he struck out an amusing phrase or hit on a humorous idea. Mr. Gladstone's great recreation was tree-felling. In one of his attacks on the Liberal leader Lord Randolph stated that even his amusements were destructive, and that the forest lamented that Mr. Gladstone might perspire. In the discussion of the procedure rules, when the Liberals declined to assist the obstructives by speaking, Lord Randolph described them as "assisting in the capacity of mutes at the obsequies of free speech."

It would not be just to say that Lord Randolph had no principles. On the contrary, he had a double set of principles. By heredity and association he was a Conservative; by temperament and intelligence he was a Liberal. He was sometimes under the sway of his inherited Conservative beliefs, and at others he was under the dominion of Liberal ideas. At one moment he talked the language of high Toryism; at another he gave expression to the views which are associated with aggressive Radicalism, which he attempted to disguise under the title of democratic Toryism. In the one mood

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

he was the savage assailant of Mr. Gladstone and the Government; in the other he was the cynical critic of the Tory leaders. His career, therefore, had no consistency, but it had the success which audacity and capacity combined generally bring. He attempted to solve an insoluble problem—to be at once a good Tory and a strong Radical. No political chemistry has yet been discovered which will fuse Liberalism and Conservatism.

Lord Randolph in one respect profoundly misinterpreted the ideas of the democracy. The last years of his political life do not come within range of these reminiscences; but he evidently believed that the democracy would appreciate and support economy in public expenditure. The history of the last quarter of a century completely disproves this view. The democracy is in favour of large and profuse expenditure. It may differ as to the objects on which the public money should be spent; but a careful, prudent and economical administration of the national finances is the last thing that it desires. I doubt if it would be possible to assemble a large public meeting solely with the object of reducing expenditure in the interests of the taxpayer. It is easy enough to get large bodies of men to oppose expenditure for specific purposes, not with the object of saving money to the national Treasury, but with the intention of devoting it to some other object. To imagine that the democracy was in favour of a rigid supervision of the national expenditure, and that a thrifty administration of the public finances would be popular, was the mistake of Lord Randolph's life. It suddenly brought his official career to a close, but even if he had succeeded in persuading his colleagues to support his plans for reducing the expenditure he would have received no thanks from the people. The extension of the franchise in 1867 and in 1885 has been followed by an almost continuous growth

184

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of expenditure, and the party of peace, retrenchment and reform are now responsible for the heaviest peace budget that has ever been laid before the Commons. The only thrifty elector in this country was the old ten-pound voter. He had little direct interest in expenditure, and he was a strong supporter of the cause of economy. His household successor takes a different view, and when the adult voter arrives he will probably be still more extravagant.

The courts had decided that Mr. Bradlaugh could not legally affirm, and he had in consequence resigned his seat. He was re-elected by a comparatively small majority, and he appeared at the bar on April 26 for the purpose of taking the oath. Sir S. Northcote at once interposed and moved that Mr. Bradlaugh should not be permitted to go through the form of repeating the words of the oath, and the motion was carried by a majority of 33. He was ordered by the Speaker to withdraw, and accompanied by the Serjeant-at-arms he went below the bar. No sooner had he reached the bar than he again advanced to the table for the purpose of being sworn. He was ordered to withdraw, and he went below the bar only to return to the table. This performance was several times repeated. As Lord R. Churchill put it, Mr. Bradlaugh engaged in a game of romps with the Serjeant-at-arms. Soon after this scandalous exhibition came to an end Mr. Gladstone promised to bring in a new Affirmation Bill, but he did not commit himself as to the time when it would be introduced. On May 10 Mr. Bradlaugh again attempted to take the oath, and this led to more rigorous and decisive action on the part of the majority. On the motion of Sir S. Northcote a motion was carried ordering the Serjeant-at-arms to remove Mr. Bradlaugh from the House until he engaged not further to disturb the proceedings. The hon. member submitted quietly to be led away by the Serjeant-at-arms.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

In the course of the session Lord R. Churchill had an angry and for him unfortunate encounter with Lord Hartington. The member for Woodstock asked Lord Hartington, who was then Secretary for India, whether he had not promised Sir F. Roberts (now Lord Roberts) £20,000 at the conclusion of the Afghanistan campaign, and had since cut it down to £12,500. Nothing stirred Lord Hartington so much as any imputation on his word, and he gave his statement a denial in singular and emphatic strength of language. He asked the noble lord whether there was any more foundation for it than "lying and calumnious paragraphs" in a certain newspaper. Lord Randolph evaded the question, and said he was not in the habit of putting questions founded on statements in newspapers. The whole House was with Lord Hartington. It knew that of all men his word was his bond, and though Lord R. Churchill rarely betrayed any signs of regret for his parliamentary escapades he did seem to feel the weight of Lord Hartington's indignation and censure.

Many days of the session had to be given to the Irish Land Bill. On one of the nights when the Bill was in Committee after the House had been cleared for a division Mr. Gladstone wished to raise a point of order. He should have done so sitting with his hat on. He first rose and was greeted with loud shouts of "Order" from all parts of the House. Mr. Gladstone was quite astonished at the storm which he had raised, but the more perplexed he looked the louder became the shouts of "Order." One of his colleagues explained the position to him, and then he resumed his seat and attempted to state the point of order. But after the question has been put from the Chair a member must speak not merely seated but with his hat on, and Mr. Gladstone was still bare-headed. Again cries of "Order" rose from every side.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

The House delights to harass in this way any one who violates its rules or conventions, and it especially enjoyed bringing its leader to book in this manner. Mr. Gladstone had not his hat with him; but the Solicitor-General, Sir Farrer Herschell, got hold of his and put it on the Prime Minister's head. It turned out to be much too small. It covered Mr. Gladstone's crown rather than his head, and when members saw him with this most inadequate head-gear they went into fits of laughter. Equipped, however, with a hat after a fashion he was able to explain his point of order.

The Committee on the Irish Land Bill occupied about thirty-one days—in those days an almost unprecedented number. Mr. Gladstone's conduct of the Bill in Committee was one of his greatest parliamentary triumphs. The subject was a difficult and complex one, and his knowledge, firmness and tact fairly beat down the Opposition. He said, I believe, that only three persons besides himself, Mr. Law, then Attorney-General for Ireland, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Healy understood the Bill. The task of driving it through was, however, a weary one, and Mr. Gladstone told a friend that he would never hear a more welcome cheer than that which would be given when the Chairman put the motion "that I report this Bill as amended to the House."

Lord R. Churchill happened at this moment to be in his high Tory mood, and without any consultation with the leaders of the Opposition he put down as an amendment to the third reading a sweeping resolution condemning the Bill as a concession to revolutionary agitation, as encouraging the repudiation of contracts, diminishing the security of property, and endangering the union between England and Ireland. He did not move the resolution, but he delivered one of the most violent and reactionary harangues that he ever addressed to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the House. It had two objects: one to wound and irritate Mr. Gladstone, and the other to identify the Bill with the programme of the Land League. When he rose to speak Sir S. Northcote, Mr. W. H. Smith and other responsible leaders of the Opposition left the House. If there had been no Land League, said Lord Randolph, there would have been no Bill. Its real author was Mr. Parnell; but, if that were so, the Irish leader showed a great unwillingness to have anything to do with his own offspring. Lord Randolph talked a great deal of what he called the apostasy of Mr. Gladstone, and then he described the Bill as a step on the ladder which led to the Olympus of Irish independence. In a rather feeble and servile copy of the style of Disraeli he asserted that the Bill "sanctioned plunder, rapacity, dishonour, agitation and mob law." Mr. George Russell, who followed, advised Mr. Gladstone not to answer the speech, and told Lord Randolph that the Fourth party had been appropriately sketched in an inspired sentence of Lord Beaconsfield in which he spoke of "a contemptible clique that dined together and called itself a party." Mr. Gladstone was not the man to allow the speech to go unanswered, and he replied to Lord Randolph in a vein of lofty and amusing contempt. The Prime Minister asserted that the Bill had been carried by the moral unanimity of the Irish members. As to Lord Randolph's speech, if all his negatives and affirmatives were reversed they would produce a satisfactory expression of his own views. Then came this bitter passage. There were animals whose office it was to bite and produce irritation, and there were other small animals whose office it was to bite but which failed to produce in their victim a sense of irritation. The noble lord's speech reminded him of the second rather than of the first class of animals.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

I need scarcely say that this comparison of Lord R. Churchill's speech to the operations of a nameless little insect was received by the supporters of the Government with roars of laughter. The noble lord himself endeavoured to take the sting out of it by a ceremonious bow to the Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone advised the noble lord to confine himself to rhetoric and declamation, arts in which it was not difficult to excel provided that you eschewed the restrictions and obstacles imposed by rigid adherence to matters of fact. The third reading was carried by an immense majority, and when Mr. Gladstone returned from the lobby after recording his vote he was received with cheer after cheer from the serried ranks of his supporters.

A question of privilege was raised by Mr. Mitchell Henry on May 30, which was important not in itself but because it afforded evidence that Mr. O'Connor Power and one or two other members of the Irish party were revolting against Mr. Parnell's dictatorship. The breach of privilege was contained in a letter of Mr. Egan, one of the leaders of the Land League, in which he compared Mr. O'Connor Power and Mr. McCoan to a black-leg, who if he won pocketed the money and if he lost refused to pay. Mr. Henry paid a compliment to Mr. Power, who had the courage of his convictions and did not, he added with a well-understood reference to Mr. Parnell, hide in London and pretend to be in Paris. The Irish leader did not betray any irritation, and discussed the question with perfect calmness. He pointed out that they had no evidence that Mr. Egan had written the letter. Mr. O'Connor Power asserted that the letter had been published by the aid of the executive of the Land League, and expressed his surprise that Mr. Parnell had neither disavowed nor reprobated the sentiments which it contained. The letter was only

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

part of a terrorism which was exercised and intended to be exercised against those who differed from the Land League. Mr. Power's eloquent and fiery denunciation of the Parnellite despotism was received with sympathetic cheers on both sides of the House. Then came a very striking incident. Mr. Power said that he had been denounced as mercenary by persons connected with the League, who during the last twelve months had asked him to use his influence to obtain situations for them. This statement produced some consternation on the Irish benches. Mr. Parnell and others called "Name," and Mr. Power at once produced facts in support of his statement, and the Irish members had no answer. Mr. Gladstone said that it would be unwise to invest Mr. Egan with any sort of glory, but described the latter as scurrilous, libellous and discreditable. He commented with scathing severity on the fact that Mr. Parnell had called Mr. Egan his friend, and had neither condemned nor disavowed his language. It was a great misfortune to Ireland that the cause of her people should be disgraced by having its support and reputation confided to such men as the writer of the letter.

Arrests were now being made under the Coercion Act, and almost every day the Chief Secretary had to answer questions regarding the exercise of his powers under that Act. When the answer was not satisfactory the adjournment of the House was moved, and Mr. Forster had the pleasure of hearing himself denounced as a Brummagem Castlereagh, and his policy as tyrannical, cowardly, infamous and so on. On one occasion Mr. Healy spoke of Ireland as the "Forster-island." On another occasion Mr. T. P. O'Connor appealed to the Government to get rid of the Chief Secretary, on the ground that he was ruining the Liberal party. Mr.

190

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Healy suggested that he should be sent to Hong-Kong, and Mr. Biggar in his most genial manner regretted that the right hon. gentleman was not going to India, and "would not be sorry to hear of him in a much warmer climate."

On Monday, June 3, Mr. Parnell deliberately brought about his own suspension. The Prime Minister had submitted a motion with reference to public business, and the Irish leader declared that he would use all the forces of the House to prevent its being carried unless the Government gave a day for the discussion of the arrest and detention of political prisoners. He seemed to be under the influence of strong feelings of indignation. The passion may have been simulated, but Mr. Parnell appeared to be so completely under its domination that it was probably genuine. He endeavoured to do what he must have known to be quite irregular on Mr. Gladstone's motion—to go into the case of the political prisoners. He was warned by the Speaker that he was out of order. Speaking in a shrill, highly-pitched voice he referred to the arrest of Father Sheehy. Again the Speaker interfered and cautioned the hon. member. It was no use. Mr. Parnell in loud and defiant tones attacked the Chair, and declared that the authorities of the House were always in favour of the powers that be. This reference to the Chair raised a great tempest in the House, and Mr. Gladstone and the Speaker sprang to their feet. In a scene of wild uproar the Speaker, Mr. Parnell and Mr. Gladstone all seemed to be speaking at once, but soon the authority of the Speaker prevailed. He announced that he had no alternative but to name Mr. Parnell for disregarding the authority of the Chair. Mr. Parnell, almost choking with passion, shouted that he would not ask the House to go through the form of a division, but would quit

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the House calling on the public to see how they refused him freedom of discussion. He departed amidst the cheers of the Liberals and the groans of his own party. Mr. Gladstone afterwards said that he had never heard such language in the House, and that he had risen for the purpose of moving that it be taken down.

On Monday, August 3, we had another and the most discreditable act in the long drama of Mr. Bradlaugh and the House. The member for Northampton attempted to take his seat by physical force. His intention was known, and, whether or not with reference to the events of the day, he came down armed with a stout oaken stick. There was a crowd of members in the lobby, and Mr. Erskine, now Sir David Erskine, the Deputy Serjeant, with several officers of the House stood near the door to bar Mr. Bradlaugh's entrance with a body of police near. The hon. member advanced through the crowd of members with the view of taking his seat, and when his intention became clear the Deputy Serjeant said to him that he had orders not to admit. "Who are you?" asked Mr. Bradlaugh. "An officer of the House," replied Mr. Erskine. "I am the duly-elected member for Northampton, and I warn you not to oppose my entrance into the House." The Deputy Serjeant replied that his orders were explicit. Mr. Bradlaugh then attempted to solve the difficulty by physical violence. He tried to force his way through the officers of the House, but though a man of great strength he failed in this effort. Mr. Bradlaugh would not after this be allowed to remain in the lobby, and the degrading struggle was prolonged until he was landed outside the members' entrance, breathless and exhausted, with his coat torn, his shirt burst open and his hair dishevelled.

It was towards the close of this session that Mr.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Gladstone made the reference to the chapel bell, which has been so often referred to in Unionist speeches. It had been asserted that the disestablishment of the Irish Church was due to the Clerkenwell outrage. Mr. Bright denied that reforms in Ireland were produced by agitation and disturbance. This statement was challenged by the Nationalists, and one of them asked what brought about the disestablishment of the Church. Mr. Gladstone replied, "A sense of justice in the people of this country." "Clerkenwell," retorted an Irish member. "Clerkenwell," said Mr. Gladstone, "had no more to do with the disestablishment of the Irish Church than the ringing of the chapel bell with the motives that brought the people to church. It simply drew attention; and is attention the same as fear?"

CHAPTER XVIII

1882

THE session of 1882 was in many respects a very remarkable one. In its opening months the war between the Government and the Nationalists was constant and relentless. Then came a brief period of peace and reconciliation, followed by a Coercion Act of extreme and excessive severity. During the recess Mr. Parnell and his friends had been obstructing the operation of the Land Act, though the Irishmen contended that their object was merely to test it. The Prime Minister told the Nationalists that in the strife between them and the Government the resources of civilisation were not exhausted, and he demonstrated the truth of this proposition by ordering Mr. Parnell, Mr. Dillon, Mr. O'Kelly and others to be arrested and lodged in Kilmainham. If ever there was a Government of combat it was Mr. Gladstone's, and all through this session they were, with the exception of a week or two, in steady conflict either with the Nationalists or the Conservatives.

At the opening of the session Mr. Bradlaugh made another attempt to take the oath. He had vacated his seat and been re-elected. He advanced to the table to be sworn, but Sir S. Northcote interposed with the motion that he should not be allowed to go through the form of taking the oath. Rising almost to the level of Lord R. Churchill, the leader of the Opposition declared that neither the House nor the country could be indifferent to the profanation of the name of God. Mr.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Bradlaugh, who was heard in his own behalf, stated that he regarded the asseveration of the oath as binding on his conscience. The motion was carried, and Mr. Bradlaugh withdrew without entering into a physical contest with the officers of the House.

In the debate on the Address Sir S. Northcote attacked the Irish policy of the Government, and was answered in a very striking speech by Mr. Gladstone. In the autumn he said that he had appealed to men of all parties to support the Government in a great crisis of the Empire, and the answer of Lord Salisbury had been that his (Mr. Gladstone's) opinions were the same as Mr. Parnell's. He paid a high tribute to Mr. Forster, all the more remarkable when we recollect that in a few weeks Mr. Forster was forced to resign. "When he was a Minister in office he did not forget the philanthropy of his early life" (cries of "Buckshot!" from the Nationalists); "but as he had striven in the field and in the hovel forty years ago to save the lives of the Irish people, so now in the days of the bewilderment and the terror of man, under the influence of false and mischievous guides, he is strong and has secured this great consummation—that the enforcement of the law should be in every instance without the shedding of a drop of the blood of the people." The Prime Minister spoke with sanguine hope of the results of his land legislation, and described the Land Act as the "infant Hercules that would yet strangle the Land League." At this time it was clear that Mr. Gladstone was confident that he would break and beat the land agitation. In this connection I may mention that the late Mr. Henry Broadhurst told me that he breakfasted one morning about this time in Downing Street, and that Mr. Gladstone told him that if he were a younger man he would be prepared to "stump" Ireland against Parnell.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

An Irish amendment to the Address on the subject of Home Rule drew a speech from Mr. Gladstone which at the present time has some significance. He was emphatically in favour of a large extension of local government to Ireland; but as to Home Rule none of its advocates had been able to define what were Irish and what were Imperial questions. Until this was done it would never be possible to come to any practical issue on the question. It was the first duty of the Irish party to point out, "in a manner that we cannot mistake, by what instrument affairs purely Irish and affairs which are Imperial are to be divided." It is clear from this speech that Mr. Gladstone was, so to speak, groping his way to Home Rule. He stated the difficulties in a manner for him usually compact, and he told the Irish party that no progress could be made until they produced a plan under which it should be clearly set forth by what authority and by what machinery they meant to distinguish between local and Imperial questions. The speech showed a marked though reserved sympathy with the Irish case, but it would have been perhaps well if in 1886 Mr. Gladstone had before making any proposals himself insisted on Mr. Parnell stating definitely what he wanted. In the course of this debate Lord Randolph first gave signs of that friendliness towards the Irish members which in this Parliament was to have very great consequences. The speech of Mr. Gladstone to which I have just referred he described as a speech of many panegyrics and a tissue of perorations, but made the ludicrous mistake of supposing that when the Prime Minister spoke of the infant Hercules he was referring to Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who had just been appointed a Lord of the Treasury. On the correction of the mistake Lord Randolph apologised, but thought the metaphor had been dictated by paternal pride. The

196

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Tory party had been called the stupid party ; but stupid was too weak to describe the extent of their imbecility if they did not avail themselves of every method of curtailing the power of a Government animated by principles fatal and ruinous to the highest interests of the country. In this speech we have a good illustration of Lord Randolph's manner. He first attacks and abuses the Government, and this he follows up by warnings and threats directed at his own leaders. It was in this debate that Mr. Sexton spoke of the Chief Secretary as a " clumsy, commonplace Cromwell."

Early in the session Mr. Gladstone had given notice of new Procedure Rules for the purpose of meeting and restricting systematic obstruction. It was curious to see, in view of the developments which have since taken place, how tenderly and diffidently the House approached the question of the closure. Under the first new rule, as proposed, the closure could only be applied when in the view of the Speaker it was the evident sense of the House. It was in moving this rule that Mr. Gladstone gave a definition of obstruction. He described it as " the disposition of a small minority to resist the prevailing will of the House otherwise than by argument "—probably as good a definition as could be framed, but by no means complete. In the debate on this question Mr. Marriott made a bitter attack on Mr. Chamberlain, which all good Unionists should now read. He compared the member for Birmingham to a burglar, and asked for what purpose he wanted the political " jemmy " of the closure. A year or two after Mr. Marriott joined the Tory party, little thinking that in four or five years Mr. Chamberlain would follow him.

A new turn was given to the interminable Bradlaugh controversy comparatively early in the session. The

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

member for Northampton walked up to the table, produced a New Testament and administered the oath to himself. The latter part of the oath was drowned amidst the clamour of the Opposition; but its closing words "So help me God," which were uttered in a loud voice, were distinctly heard. The Speaker, who had risen when Mr. Bradlaugh began to take the oath, reminded him of the resolution of the House passed on February 7, and ordered him to withdraw below the bar. Mr. Bradlaugh said that he would obey, but that having taken the oath he would now proceed to take his seat. He accordingly sat down on one of the benches below the gangway. The Speaker told him that he must go below the bar. He replied, "I will obey your direction, but I have taken my seat." Lord R. Churchill constituted himself the organ of the indignant opposition. He described the conduct of the hon. member as wanton insult and outrage on the House, and moved that a new writ should be issued for Northampton. The adjournment of the debate was moved by the Attorney-General, who reminded the House that if Mr. Bradlaugh voted without taking the oath he would incur a penalty of £500 for every vote so given. The debate was adjourned, and next day was Ash Wednesday, which Mr. Callan gracefully suggested was an appropriate day for discussing in sackcloth and ashes an outrage committed by a blasphemous infidel. Sir Stafford Northcote moved an amendment to the motion for the issue of the writ to the effect that the Serjeant-at-arms be instructed to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh from entering the House. Lord R. Churchill described the proposal of his leader as a milk-and-water resolution, and quite inadequate as a punishment for the scandalous and profane mummeries which they had witnessed at the table. The motion for the new writ was negatived,

198

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and when Sir S. Northcote's amendment became the main question Mr. Bradlaugh walked out from under the gallery and took his place on one of the benches below the gangway. Instantly the House was in an uproar, which was only allayed by the rising of the Speaker. In a stately and authoritative manner he told Mr. Bradlaugh that he had been guilty of disobedience to the orders of the House, and thereupon the hon. gentleman returned to his seat under the gallery. His action, however, had strengthened and intensified the indignation of the Opposition, and Sir S. Northcote withdrew his motion in order to substitute one for the expulsion of Mr. Bradlaugh. The division took place amid great excitement, and Mr. Bradlaugh himself voted in the "No" lobby. On the motion of the leader of the Opposition a new writ was ordered for the borough of Northampton—in other words, he obeyed the order which Lord Randolph Churchill had issued earlier in the debate.

In the course of a discussion on the Irish Estimates Mr. Biggar gave the House a characteristic exhibition of his manners and morals. He made an attack on Mr. Herbert Gladstone, marked at once by its feebleness and its brutality. He described the hon. gentleman as "Young Hopeful"; spoke of his going to superintend evictions in Ireland, and suggested that he should have the reversion of Marwood's office of public hangman. This speech brought down on the hon. member a weighty rebuke from the Prime Minister; but it might as well have been addressed to the box on the table. He described it as brutal and scandalous, and put it to the member himself whether he should not apologise for what he had said. Mr. Biggar's way was not the way of retractation or apology, and he sat silently grinning. On the same night he charged Mr. Forster with neglecting

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

his business and spending a great deal of his time at a certain gambling-house in Dublin. The Chairman called Mr. Biggar to order, and he so far modified his language as to substitute for gambling-house St. Stephen's Club. A day or two later, in a debate with reference to some arrest under the Coercion Act, Mr. Biggar surpassed even himself. Mr. Forster had addressed a meeting at Tullamore, and the hon. member described the Chief Secretary as a cock crowing on his own homestead. This was vulgar, and then came the brutality, for he suggested that when Mr. Forster went to Ireland in the time of the famine he did so not from motives of humanity, but for the pleasure of seeing the sufferings of his fellows. He was at once called to order and required to withdraw, which, having given all the pain he could, he cheerfully did.

Owing to the debates on Coercion and the discussion of the Procedure Rules the business of the House had got very much behind. Mr. Childers, the War Minister, began to make the annual statement on the Army Estimates at a quarter to one in the morning, and Sir George Trevelyan on the Navy Estimates a quarter of an hour before midnight.

In the debate on the first procedure resolution Mr. Bright defended its proposals as necessary for the restoration of freedom to the House of Commons. It was in this speech that Mr. Bright declared war on the policy and tactics of the Nationalist party. The Irish members were at war with the Government and Parliament, and their only object was to make parliamentary government impossible. He commented on the conduct of Mr. Healy and Mr. T. P. O'Connor in attending the Chicago Convention, which did what it could to levy war against this country. These two honourable members, "for," said Mr. Bright, with cutting sarcasm, "we are

200

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

all honourable members here," had taken the oath of allegiance at that table, and yet they had not raised their voices in the slightest degree against the language used at Chicago. He called them the "Mason and Sliddell of the new secession"—Mason and Sliddell having been the envoys sent by the Southern Confederacy during the American Civil War to enlist the support of this country. He asked, amidst the listening silence of his hearers, "whether the House of Commons with its centuries of renown and its centuries of service was to be made prostrate, powerless and useless at the bidding of a handful of men who tell you that they despise you and by their conduct would degrade you." It is hardly necessary to say how an appeal of this kind so nobly phrased was received by the House. To Mr. Bright the Irish members were henceforth "the rebel party," and three times in his letter to Mr. Gladstone on the Home Rule Bill of 1886 he used that phrase.

After the Easter recess the Irish members renewed their attacks on Mr. Forster, and they held up to public opprobrium Mr. Clifford Lloyd, one of Mr. Forster's special resident magistrates, who had charge of one of the disturbed districts. These magistrates were denounced by the Nationalists as satraps, and Mr. Clifford Lloyd was described as a Turkish Pasha and Bashi-Bazouk. Mr. Forster's reply was that this magistrate stood between hundreds of men and women and murder, maiming and ruin. It was in this debate that Mr. John Redmond, referring to Mr. Forster, used the words "if he were an honest politician or even an honest man." He was ordered to withdraw the words, but instead Mr. Redmond said that he was sorry that the rules of the House militated against the telling of the truth. He was told by the Speaker that he had not withdrawn the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

words. Mr. Redmond said that he rose for the purpose of withdrawing them, but he started by saying that he was sorry that it was not within his power to make use of the expression within the walls of the House. This was, of course, repeating the offensive phrase, and Mr. Redmond was thereupon named and suspended.

Some time after Easter the whole situation was suddenly transformed. The policy of coercion was temporarily abandoned, and the Liberals and the Nationalists found themselves in friendly alliance. No more startling change has been witnessed in the political world. The first sign of coming events was the retirement of Earl Cowper from the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland. He was succeeded by Lord Spencer, but this change, it was obvious, would greatly affect the position of the Chief Secretary. With Lord Cowper as Lord-Lieutenant Mr. Forster was the real ruler of Ireland. With Lord Spencer, a member of the Cabinet, at the Castle the Chief Secretary would be in a different and subordinate position, and there was much speculation as to what Mr. Forster would do. The question was soon solved. On Tuesday, May 2, it was announced that Mr. Forster had resigned. On the same night Mr. Gladstone informed the House that Mr. Parnell, Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Kelly would be released from Kilmainham; that the cases of the other suspects would be examined, and that the Government had decided so far as they could at the present time not to renew the Coercion Act. The decision of the Government entailed, said Mr. Gladstone, one lamentable consequence, the resignation of the Chief Secretary, who declined to share the responsibility for the measures he had described. The Conservatives broke into a cheer so prolonged that it stopped Mr. Gladstone for some time. Sir S. Northcote floundered helplessly in his attempts to criticise Mr.

202

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Gladstone's statement. His speech showed clearly that he was thoroughly embarrassed, and did not quite know what to make of the situation. Mr. Chaplin gave full tongue to the indignation of the Conservatives, and denounced the action of the Government as a surrender to the Land League. He even rose to the height of poetry, and adapting Byron's lines exclaimed—

“Sound the loud timbrel o'er Ireland's dark sea,
The Land League hath triumphed, the suspects are free.”

To all the indignant declamation of the Opposition Mr. Gladstone replied that the policy of the Government was a true, wise and effectual way of vindicating the law.

So far nothing had been said of what came to be called, in the current political talk of the day, the Kilmainham Treaty; but the story of how the release of the prisoners was arranged came out in Mr. Forster's statement on the following Thursday. Mr. Davitt, whose arrest had so enraged the Nationalists, was discharged from Portland, and it was announced that Lord Frederick Cavendish had been appointed Chief Secretary. This appointment was a surprise. Lord Frederick was not a good debater, and had shown no marked capacity in any political sphere; but he was animated by great good-will to Ireland. It was recognised that in the work of administration he would be entirely subordinate to Lord Spencer.

On May 4 Mr. Gladstone told a curious and interested House that Government had received information which they deemed to be of great importance, and which prompted and justified their conduct in releasing the suspects. It would, however, be proper for him to leave these gentlemen to make their own declaration at the proper time. Mr. Parnell was not present at this

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

moment, but Mr. Dillon, Mr. O'Kelly and Mr. Sexton asked whether the Government had received any information from them with regard to the No-rent manifesto, and Mr. Gladstone replied that no names had been separately mentioned. From whom, asked Sir M. H. Beach, had the right hon. gentleman received the information to which he had referred? The Prime Minister replied that it came from members of the House, one of the most important of whom was not present, and it was for them to consider whether they would say anything on the matter.

On the same day Mr. Forster made a statement regarding his resignation, and it necessarily threw some additional light on the circumstances under which the suspects had been released. Practically Mr. Forster's statement came to this that he could not agree on the policy of releasing the suspects on the conditions suggested, and he entreated his late colleagues not to buy obedience to the law by concessions to those who had been encouraging its violation. Mr. Gladstone denied that there had been any compact, bargain, or negotiations with the released members, but he admitted that the Government had availed themselves of information which had been tendered to them by men who were sensible factors in the situation. The statement was received with cheers and laughter, but it still left matters in some degree of obscurity, and it was not made any clearer by the subsequent statement of Mr. Parnell, who entered the House while Mr. Forster was speaking. The Irish leader denied that he had in any communication or conversation with his friends discussed the question of the release of himself and his fellow-members; but he acknowledged that he had said verbally, and had also written, that if the arrears question were settled it would have an enormous effect on the restoration of law and

204

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

order, and would take away the last excuse for the outrages which had been unhappily committed.

It was these sentences in Mr. Parnell's speech that formed the foundation of the charge that a treaty had been arranged in Kilmainham. There was, in fact, no treaty, but we all know now that Mr. Parnell, at least, had let it be known, through Captain O'Shea, that if the arrears question were settled the influence of himself and others would be thrown on the side of law and order. Mr. Dillon, with gloomy sturdiness, repudiated all idea of a bargain with the Government, and said that he was free to take what course he liked. Mr. O'Kelly was still more emphatic in repelling the suggestion of an arrangement with Ministers, for with much dramatic energy he told the House that he would have died rather than have made any terms of the kind. Then came Captain O'Shea, whose speech did much to clear up a rather perplexing situation. If there was a negotiator it was the gallant gentleman; but he did little more than tell the Government what he knew of Mr. Parnell's sentiments, and tell the Irish leader what he knew of the views of the Government. He had gone to Kilmainham and seen the member for Cork. He had been inspired by no one. He had offered suggestions, which had been kindly received. The Liberal party were undoubtedly glad that whatever the arrangement was with Mr. Parnell there was to be a change of policy. It would be a mistake, however, to say that Mr. Forster's policy had failed, for phrase it as one may like it had brought the Irish leader to terms. There was every prospect of co-operation between the Liberals and the Nationalists, when the prospects of peace were suddenly ruined by the assassination of Lord F. Cavendish and Mr. Burke, the Irish Under Secretary, in the Phoenix Park, Dublin.

CHAPTER XIX

1882 (*continued*)

THE assassinations profoundly stirred the public mind, and their effect was to drive back the Government on a policy of strong coercion. On the very day of Lord F. Cavendish's funeral Sir W. Harcourt brought in a Crimes Bill of a very stringent character. The Government were thrown into a semi-panic; but they did not know and could not know at the time how small in numbers were the society of the Invincibles. Sir W. Harcourt's measure suspended trial by jury in disaffected districts, and established special tribunals presided over by three judges to administer justice in the case of certain crimes. The Bill gave the power of search by day and night, in proclaimed districts, for what Sir W. Harcourt called the apparatus of murder, and the right to arrest any persons who could not give an account of themselves. It empowered stipendiary magistrates to deal with cases of riot, intimidation and assault. It authorised the executive to suppress public meetings dangerous to the public peace, and to confiscate newspapers which preached crime and assassination. The enormous sweep and severity of these provisions startled the supporters of the Government. They had not anticipated a measure so drastic and stringent in its character, and I well remember that Sir W. Harcourt spoke without a single cheer from his party. The provisions of the bill were hailed with delight by the Opposition. Mr. Chaplin

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

observed, not with regret but with delight, that it was the most severe Coercion Bill ever introduced into Parliament, and he pointedly asked Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain whether they still thought that force was no remedy. Mr. Forster had just been driven out of office for his resolute administration of the Coercion Act, and there was a tinge of irony as well as a note of triumph in the congratulations which he offered to his late colleagues on the introduction of the most repressive measure ever presented to Parliament. Mr. Bright did not shrink from answering Mr. Chaplin's taunt. Force was no remedy for discontent, but force, he said, must be met by force. The Irish members seemed momentarily stunned by Sir W. Harcourt's statement, but of their attitude towards the Bill there could be no doubt. Mr. Parnell denounced it in the strongest terms. His speech was marked by its concentrated force and intense feeling. He denied that the Irish people approved of assassinations, and asserted that this Bill far from preventing crime would increase it tenfold. The Government had not yet discovered the solution of that undiscoverable problem—the government of one nation by another. The speech of the late Chief Secretary was described by Mr. Dillon as bloodthirsty, a phrase which he had to withdraw. Speaking with some emotion he said that he would have gladly risked his own life for that of Lord F. Cavendish, but the policy which the Government had adopted would drive the two nations into a course of brutal repression and retaliation.

The whole facts bearing on the so-called compact, or Treaty of Kilmainham, came out in the House of Commons on May 15. The arrangement, or whatever it may be called, was based on a letter written by Mr. Parnell to Captain O'Shea. In this letter, which the Irish

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

leader read to the House, he said that if the arrears question were settled on lines he had indicated he had every confidence, which was shared by his colleagues, that the exertions which we should be able to make strenuously and unremittingly would be effective in stopping outrages and intimidation of all kinds. He also suggested that leaseholders should be brought within the operation of the Land Act, and that there should be some amendment of the tenure clauses of that measure. The acceptance of this programme would be regarded as a practical settlement of the land question, and the Government would be justified in dispensing with further coercive measures. Mr. Parnell made the mistake of omitting one part of a sentence in the letter. The late Chief Secretary had a copy of it in his hand, and he pointedly asked the Irish leader if he had read the whole of it. Mr. Parnell acknowledged that one sentence had been omitted. Mr. Forster handed the letter to Captain O'Shea, and that gentleman supplied the missing sentence as follows: "And would, I feel sure, enable us to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal principles." The reading of this sentence threw the Opposition into a paroxysm of joy. They cheered again and again. If I am not mistaken it was received with surprise and regret by some of Mr. Parnell's colleagues. The words "co-operating with the Liberal party" seemed to stick in their throats, and it covered the declarations of Mr. Dillon and others a few days before with an air of unreality if not of ridicule. Later in the day the Arrears Bill was brought in, and had it not been for the tragedy of the Phoenix Park murders it would probably have opened a new chapter in the history of Ireland and in the relations of the Liberal

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and the Irish parties. I base this opinion on the statement which Mr. Parnell himself made a few days later.

Next day, May 16, there was a debate on the so-called Kilmainham Treaty. It was in this debate that Mr. A. J. Balfour and Mr. Gladstone had the first of their many parliamentary conflicts. Though Mr. Balfour had been in the House since 1874 he had not taken a very conspicuous part in debate. If he belonged to the Fourth party he was rather a lukewarm member of it, and he never—perhaps with a sense of responsibilities to come—took part in their purely obstructive operations. He moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the Kilmainham Treaty, and he showed in his speech that he was already a master of vigorous invective. He did not wish, he said, to use strong language, but this transaction stood alone in its infamy. The Government had degraded the executive by negotiating with treason. The bargain, he said, resembled an incident in a comedy of Molière. The hero declared that he had not sold his goods, but had given them to a friend, who in exchange had given him some money. Mr. Gladstone replied to Mr. Balfour's charges with intense vehemence and kindling passion. It was the first time that Mr. Balfour had felt the full torrent of Mr. Gladstone's eloquence directed on himself, and he seemed appalled by its force. The charge, said Mr. Gladstone, was that Mr. Parnell was to get his release and an Arrears Bill, and the Government were to have peace in Ireland and the parliamentary support of the Nationalists. There was not, said the right hon. gentleman with tremendous emphasis, one word of truth in the charge from beginning to end. In a tone of sorrowful indignation—for he and

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Balfour were then at least personal friends—he complained that the hon. gentleman should give the lie direct to men who had grown grey in the public service. Then he read a letter written to Mr. Forster in reference to Mr. Parnell's offer—for beyond all doubt the Irish leader made an offer of parliamentary support : “ This is a proffer which we have no right to expect, and which I rather think we have no right to accept.” This letter destroyed altogether the idea of a treaty or compact. Sir W. Harcourt reminded Mr. Balfour that he had been brought up in the school of secret memoranda. He served under a Government which signed a secret memorandum (this was a reference to the Shouvaloff memorandum referred to in a previous chapter), and then when it was published denied that it was authentic. The present Government, said Sir W. Harcourt, was incapable of that.

In the debate on the second reading of the Crimes Bill, which took place on May 18, Mr. Macfarlane, who was alternately an Irish and a Scotch member, described Mr. Forster both as Pharaoh and Jonah. As Pharaoh he had brought all the plagues of Egypt on Ireland, and as Jonah he had been thrown overboard by the Government. Mr. Sexton, who was winning a great position as a debater, made a powerful attack on the policy of coercion. He spoke of the storm of rage which had swept over England after the Phoenix Park murders, but when Mr. Gladstone objected to the word “ rage ” he substituted “ storm of emotion.” The Prime Minister defended the Bill in a speech of great moderation. He evidently did not like it, and regarded it as a matter of regrettable necessity.

Then came Mr. Parnell, whose speech was in every sense a remarkable one. It proved that he had come

210

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

out of Kilmainham a changed man. It was in marked contrast to that of Mr. Sexton. There was no violence or bitterness in its language, and it was meek, almost submissive, in its deference to the House. He denounced the Bill, indeed, but there was no trace of that relentless hostility to the Government and to England which used to pervade his speeches. They had found, he said, in memorable sentences, the Prime Minister during the last two years to be a great and strong man, and it was no dishonour to admit that he had fought them in a way that they would not like to be fought by any one in future. He regretted that the event in the Phoenix Park had prevented him from continuing his conciliatory policy, and that he had turned to the path of coercion, which would only lead to greater disaster. In mournful tones he asserted that under this Bill all public action in Ireland must cease, and it would be for himself and his friends to consider whether they would continue in public life. This speech produced a most profound impression in the House. It was an indirect admission that in the two years' conflict with the Nationalists the Government had won, and, moreover, it proved that the Irish leader would have pursued the sane and prudent policy of co-operating with the Liberal party. In saying that Mr. Parnell came out of Kilmainham a "changed man" I have a witness greater and more authoritative than that of his colleagues, to whom he seems not to have opened his mind freely on the subject. I refer to Mrs. O'Shea. She wrote to the Prime Minister, and asked him to call on her. He did so, and this is the account which Mr. Gladstone gave of the interview to Mr. Barry O'Brien: "She said that a great change had come over Parnell with reference to myself and with reference to the Liberal party, and

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that he desired friendly relations with us.”¹ The happy prospect of co-operation was destroyed by the act of the Invincibles. The Government were driven into a policy of stern repression, and Mr. Parnell was forced once more into the arms of his more extreme supporters, and compelled for the rest of the Parliament to wage fierce and constant war on the Government. The Phoenix Park murders had at a critical moment given to the policy of the Government and to the action of the Irish party a cruel and unfortunate direction. There have been few sadder tragedies in politics. In the course of the debate Mr. O'Connor Power said that if the Bill was not the production of a wild and reckless panic, the Government must have grounds not yet known to the House on which to base the abolition of trial by jury. While the hon. member described the measure as an invasion of the rights of the Irish people and a shameful confession that English administration in Ireland was a disgraceful failure, he did not hesitate to denounce the doctrine of boycotting as brutal and immoral—a sentiment which then found little favour on the Irish benches. The Coercion Bill was read a second time by an overwhelming majority, but so deeply did the majority regret the course which affairs had taken that the result was received in silence.

The Committee on the Bill came on a Wednesday. This was the Derby Day, and it was the first time for forty years that the House had sat on the day of the great race. On the motion to go into Committee Mr. Dillon delivered a very remarkable and violent speech. He spoke from ample notes, and was evidently careful not to overstep the limits of parliamentary order.

¹ *Life of Parnell*, by Barry O'Brien, vol. ii. p. 261.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

The speech was hard, bitter and relentless in its tone. I recollect that it was heard with pain and astonishment on the Liberal side, and even the Irish members seemed disconcerted by the terrible frankness of their colleague. It not only embodied Mr. Dillon's fanatical and sombre hatred of the English government, but it was a defence of boycotting in its worst form, and indirectly of what made boycotting effective. He referred to Mr. Power's denunciation of boycotting—as brutal and immoral—and asserted that boycotting had kept a roof-tree over the heads of hundreds of poor families. He challenged the hon. member for Mayo to vacate his seat, and said that if he did he would stand against him on the question of boycotting. He declared that he would not denounce outrages till the Government denounced eviction. Boycotting he advocated without the slightest qualification, and he did so on the ground that the Irish people could in this way more effectually protect their rights than by murders, outrages and burnings. Mr. Dillon, as Mr. Gladstone subsequently said, “let the House into his mind.” A blood-tax might make an Irish peasant sorry for a murder unless he obtained an advantage from it, and he suggested with a kind of saturnine humour that if the arrears question were left to the Irish people it would be settled without a penny of cost to the English taxpayers. Mr. Gladstone had listened with close attention to Mr. Dillon's speech. It was evidently a shock to him, as it was to the rest of the House, but he replied to it not with passion but with sorrow. The rebuke which he administered to Mr. Dillon lost none of its weight and severity by the moderate language in which it was couched. The speech he described in an historical word as “heart-breaking.” It would, he said, clear the issue between

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

all law-abiding and law-obeying men on the one side and the hon. member on the other. "The possessor of property," said Mr. Gladstone, "who after exhausting every means of conciliation was driven to make use of his powers for the establishment of his legal rights, perhaps to support himself and his family, was placed by the deliberate declaration of Mr. Dillon in the same position as the perpetrator of outrage. That these declarations should be made in behalf of the people of Ireland in the name of liberty in the great temple of liberty"—(an ironic cheer from Mr. Biggar)—"with the scoffing cheers of the member for Cavan, constituted a state of affairs which was among the gravest and most grievous facts that could carry sorrow to the depth of my heart and rejoicing and mockery to the heart of the member for Cavan." Referring to Mr. Dillon's defence of boycotting, he said that the creed of boycotting required a sanction, and the sanction of boycotting—by which alone it could be made effective—was the murder which was not to be denounced. He told Mr. Dillon that he had no right to pursue the land campaign except on the basis of legal agitation. Mr. Parnell, who spoke later in the debate, was placed in a rather embarrassing position. He could neither ignore nor repudiate Mr. Dillon's speech, and he performed a difficult task with much dexterity : without throwing over Mr. Dillon he contrived to make the House understand that he did not share his opinions. In everything but form the speech was a contradiction of what his colleague had said. It was natural, he said, that the Prime Minister should draw the inference which he did from Mr. Dillon's speech. He appeared to think that intimidation would be persevered in after the Land Act had been amended, but nothing could be further

214

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

from the intentions of himself and his friends. Their desire was to tranquillise the minds of the people and keep the land movement within the bounds of moderation. While he defended exclusive dealing in the circumstances in which it had been started, he admitted that it had been grossly abused and practically said that it would be given up. He appealed to the Prime Minister not to proceed with the Crimes Bill. Mr. G. Russell regarded this speech as reparation for the errors of the past; but the suggestion was hotly repudiated by the Nationalists, who evidently resented the idea of their leader being charged either with repentance or moderation. Mr. Parnell's speech again showed how reluctant he was to fall back on a policy of violence and exasperation. Mr. O'Connor Power, referring to Mr. Dillon's challenge, took the high ground that he could not admit that the electors either of Mayo or Tipperary had the right to guide his actions on questions of justice or morals.

The discussion of the Bill in Committee was prolonged. After the House had been several days engaged on it Sir W. Harcourt threatened the adoption of more urgent measures to carry it through. This declaration led to a passionate and angry protest. Finding that the Government were determined to carry the Bill, Mr. Parnell's Kilmainham manner disappeared, and no one could be surprised at it. He was ready to play his part in the policy of conciliation, but as the Government would not or could not play theirs he fell back on his old position, and charged the Home Secretary with legislating in an unreasoning panic, adding that he and Mr. Forster had been the curses of the ministry. He denounced Lord Spencer, who, he said, was saturated with the spirit of the Castle. Sir W. Harcourt retorted

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that he did not consider the coarse abuse and vituperation of the Irish members worthy of any further notice. The Government had determined to bring the Committee to a close at the sitting which began on June 30. The early part of the proceedings were comparatively uninteresting, and the real struggle began about two o'clock on Saturday morning. Somewhere about that hour Sir W. Harcourt accepted an amendment, and Mr. Healy congratulated him on hailing "the smiling morn" by a concession to the Irish members. Mr. Healy was the life and soul of this struggle. He was often abusive, occasionally clever, and once or twice rather offensive. At seven in the morning Sir W. Harcourt delivered a vigorous philippic against the Irish members, and denounced their intolerable and unjustifiable waste of time. Mr. Parnell replied with warmth, and said that the Irish members would appeal to their countrymen at home and abroad—a menace which was received with considerable indignation. He asked what the Irish members had to gain by this opposition. "Money" was the abrupt and awkward reply given by Mr. Noel, then the member for the Dumfries boroughs. The answer for the moment staggered Mr. Parnell, but he soon recovered himself and went on to say that this legislation would increase crime and alienate the people from law and order. The game of obstruction went on till past nine in the morning, when Mr. Biddulph asked the Chairman whether it was not time that this miserable farce should be put an end to. The Chairman of Committees, Dr. Lyon Playfair, gave the Irish members a brief but unmistakable warning. In his opinion deliberate obstruction existed and he would soon have to indicate the names of those engaged in it. The warning produced no effect,

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and a few minutes later the Chairman named sixteen members as guilty of obstruction. The comprehensive range of the Chairman's action astonished the Nationalists. Mr. O'Donnell was the first to recover his tongue, and he denounced the action of the Chairman as an infamy. Mr. Childers, who was at the moment leading the House, moved the suspension of the sixteen members, and of course the motion was carried by a great majority. Mr. Biggar, being the first of those named, was asked first to withdraw, and Mr. Healy, moved either by brotherly affection or by a desire for dramatic effect, said "let us all go together." The suggestion was at once acted upon, and the members named rose and left in a body, but not before Mr. Callan had said that he had been suspended on the false report of the salaried official of an unprincipled Government. The suspended members made their way to the strangers' gallery, from which they witnessed the rest of the proceedings. The residuum of the Irish party endeavoured to carry on the struggle; but after a time nine more members were named and suspended. Only two or three of the Nationalist party were now left in the House, and they gave up the fight. The Bill passed through Committee, and the House rose after sitting over twenty-eight hours. At the next sitting of the House Mr. O'Donnell was suspended for fourteen days for having called the action of the Chairman in suspending himself an infamy. At the instance of Mr. Gladstone the Prevention of Crimes Bill was declared urgent, and when the resolution was carried Mr. McCarthy said that he and his colleagues would take no further part in the discussion of the Bill, and the great bulk of the Nationalists rose and left the House. If the whole party had acted on this resolution they would have shown at least dignity and self-respect,

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

but unfortunately some five or six members walked solemnly out with the others and then returned to take part in the proceedings. The further stages of the Bill led to no serious difficulty, and in due course it became law.

When the Arrears Bill, with which the Government hoped to neutralise the effects of the land agitation in Ireland, reached the Lords a remarkable incident occurred. The Peers made certain amendments in the Bill, which on the advice of Mr. Gladstone the Commons refused to accept. Lord Salisbury urged his party to stand by the amendments. At a meeting of the Tory peers it had, however, been decided by an overwhelming majority that the Arrears Bill should not be thrown out. Lord Salisbury had to come down to the House and publicly announce that in consequence of the desertion of his party he was obliged to give way. "I do not share their opinion," he said. "If I had the power I should have thrown out the Bill; but I should find myself in a small minority, and therefore I will not divide the House." Rarely has the leader of a great party been compelled publicly to proclaim his own humiliation. The House of Lords had then a wholesome fear of Mr. Gladstone. At the time it was expected that Lord Salisbury would resign the leadership of the party in the Upper House, but he swallowed his pride and retained his position.

The House of Commons met towards the end of October to deal with the rules of procedure. Before it entered on this discussion Lord R. Churchill endeavoured to interpose a constitutional barrier in the way. The Appropriation Bill had been passed before Parliament adjourned in August, and Lord Randolph now contended that it should have been retained under

218

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the control of the House till the autumn. If a vote of censure were passed on the Government Mr. Gladstone could prorogue and for several months simply defy Parliament. Even if the Archangel Gabriel were Prime Minister, the noble lord, in language which must now sound rather strange in Conservative ears, declared that "he would not sacrifice in the smallest, the minutest, the slightest degree the rights of the House of Commons." The constitutional issue raised by Lord Randolph was not taken quite seriously. Mr. Gladstone's reply was somewhat ironical in tone. He told the noble lord that his precedents were inapplicable, his facts inaccurate, and his history bad. The justification of the course taken by the Government was, as the Prime Minister put it in one phrase, the deplorable state of public business. Her referred, however, to a precedent in 1820 which covered the present case, and submitted that it "entirely smashed, destroyed and pulverised the argument" of the noble lord.

On October 27 Mr. Gladstone moved a vote of thanks to the officers and men who had been engaged in the Egyptian expedition, and in his speech he gave a very picturesque description of the march of Lord Wolseley's army in the silence of night and guided only by the stars to the point where at dawn they were to assault the entrenchments at Tel-el-Kebir. His reference to the Guards, who had left in the height of health and youth and had come back worn and in some cases emaciated by the labours of the campaign, was regarded by some people as rather overstrained. Sir W. Lawson objected to votes of thanks to soldiers any more than to civilians, and said that if they were to thank anybody it should be the Prime Minister, whose war this was. He asked amidst much laughter whether there were

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

any Radicals left below the gangway, and asserted that the war had been supported by Radicals, Non-conformists and Quakers. They ought to pass a vote of thanks to the Egyptian troops for having run away. Mr. Labouchere took exception to the words in the resolution of thanks describing the war as "the suppression of a military rebellion against the Khedive." Mr. Gladstone defended the words as strictly accurate, and reminded the House that the civil war in England was generally known as "the great rebellion."

The opposition to the new rules was mainly conducted by Lord Randolph Churchill, and the titular leader of the Conservatives played quite a secondary part in the proceedings. The noble lord proclaimed his unalterable and undying hostility to the Government proposals, but he was not backed very heartily by the Tory party. An interesting discussion took place on an amendment requiring a two-thirds majority to carry the closure. Mr. Gladstone resisted the proposal very strongly, and insisted that the gagging of a large minority was impossible. "The normal attitude," he said, "of an Opposition who resist, dislike and want to get rid of a measure if they can is to keep it back, and this being their aim the proposal before us is that they shall receive a solemn vote of the House allowing the majority to be handed over to them." On this question Lord Randolph separated himself from the general body of the Opposition, and denied that a two-thirds majority would be a dyke behind which the Conservatives could shelter themselves. The Liberals would always obtain a two-thirds majority, but the Conservatives rarely. If the Prime Minister found that a two-thirds majority did not work satisfactorily from his point of view, he could come down and say that the state of business was

220

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

deplorable, that the session was one of ruin and discomfiture; and this little dyke of two-thirds majority would be demolished, cut down and swept away into the dustbin of all modern constitutional securities. Mr. Balfour answered Lord Randolph, and strongly advocated the two-thirds majority. Mr. Labouchere gave the House a sketch of what would happen in the "democratic millennium." There would be a short and easy way with the Conservatives, whom he regarded as "natural obstructives." After the country had made up its mind on a Bill, discussion was useless. He would allow the Opposition half-an-hour to state their case, and then apply the closure. In the course of this debate an extraordinary statement was made by Sir W. Hart Dyke, who had been Chief Whip in Lord Beaconsfield's Government. When Mr. Raikes was Chairman of Committees he (Sir Hart Dyke) was constantly at his elbow asking him why he did not get on with this clause and that. More was heard of this later.

The one argument of the Opposition against the new rules was "free speech," and in support of this view they found an eloquent champion in Mr. Joseph Cowen. In one of the debates he delivered a magnificent piece of rhetoric in favour of unlimited freedom of debate. It was aglow with passion, and his rugged accent seemed to increase the picturesque force of his eloquence. If he had been defending the freedom of Parliament against the encroachments of the Crown his speech would have had a sense of reality as well as a tinge of splendour. His panegyric on the English Parliament was impressive, but it had no relation to the facts of the situation. Members felt that Mr. Cowen was defending what was not attacked. The Attorney-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

General, Sir H. James, replied to Mr. Cowen with great spirit, and accused him of sitting on one side of the House and voting with the other. The time had come when he should cross the floor, face the Liberals, and sit among those with whom he invariably acted. The learned gentleman little thought that four or five years later the same taunt might be addressed to himself.

One of the new rules provided that speeches on the motion for the adjournment of the House or to report progress, which up till then might be very wide and discursive, should be confined to the matter of such motion. Lord R. Churchill proposed to exclude from its operation the Committee of the whole House, and in support of it referred to Sir Hart Dyke's statement that he was always at the elbow of the Chairman of the Committees. Mr. Gladstone told the House that when he heard this statement a few days before he made at the time this note : " In this practice he was without a predecessor and would be without an imitator." In his speech the Prime Minister stated that it had been the invariable practice of the Chairman of Committees on all questions of importance to vote in the House itself. " With the Government," interjected Lord R. Churchill. There had been cases, replied Mr. Gladstone, when the Chairman of Committees had not agreed with the Government. Sir W. Hart Dyke on a subsequent day gave a very halting and unsatisfactory explanation of the statement to which Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Gladstone had called attention. He told the House that he intended to refer not to what had occurred, but to what might take place between the official Whip of the future and the Chairman of Committees ; but this explanation was in direct contradiction of his actual

222

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

language, and was received by his own party in chilling silence.

Mr. Gladstone's reference to the action of the Chairman of Committees in voting in the House raises an interesting point. In the earlier period covered by these reminiscences the Chairman of Committees, who always belonged to the party in power, voted as a rule with his party, and therefore in support of the Government of the day. This practice continued to be generally followed till the introduction of Home Rule. The controversy on that subject increased the bitterness of party conflicts, and this has gradually led to a change in the position of the Chairman of Committees. Sir Lyon Playfair, who was Chairman of Committees in the 1880 Parliament, voted for the second reading of the Coercion Act of 1881 and of the Crimes Act of 1882; but Mr. Courtney, who filled the same position in the next Parliament, abstained from the division on the second reading of the Coercion Act of 1887. In the succeeding Parliament Mr. Mellor, the Chairman of Committees, voted for the second reading of the Government of Ireland Bill in 1893 and of the Welsh Church Disestablishment Bill in 1895. Mr. J. W. Lowther, the present Speaker, when he became Chairman of Committees, finally established the practice that the member filling that position should not take part in divisions on great party questions. He did not vote on the second reading of the Education Bill of 1902 or of the Licensing Bill of 1904. When Mr. Emmott became Chairman of Committees, in 1906, he followed the same course. He did not vote on the second reading of the Education Bill of 1906, though his deputy, Mr. Caldwell, did. In 1908 neither he nor Mr. Caldwell took part in the division on the Licensing Bill, so that it may now

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

be regarded as an established rule that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman should not vote in divisions on Government Bills or party motions. Thus two votes will be lost to the ministry of the day, and when the Speaker belongs to the dominant party the number will be increased to three.

Before the rules of procedure were finally disposed of there was a debate on the Kilmainham Treaty. No fresh facts were brought to light, and Mr. Gladstone repeated emphatically that the whole story was a complete fiction. The discussion took place on a motion for the adjournment of the House—one of the first that took place under the new rule providing that the adjournment could only be moved on a definite matter of urgent public importance. The Speaker now decides whether the question is one of urgent public importance; but this was not the view taken by Mr. Speaker Peel, who first applied the rule. On the occasion of the debate on the Kilmainham Treaty Mr. Thorold Rogers asked if it related to a definite matter of urgent public importance. The reply of the Speaker was that the hon. member who made the motion had stated on his own authority that it was a definite matter of urgent public importance, and he (the Speaker) had no authority to contradict him.

CHAPTER XX

1883

WHEN the session of 1883 opened Mr. Gladstone was at Cannes, whither he had been sent by his doctor, Sir Andrew Clark. He had been suffering from sleeplessness after the labours of the autumn session. Much indignation was aroused by a speech of Sir Robert Peel suggesting that the illness was non-existent. The Prime Minister was afraid to face the difficulties of the situation, so Sir Robert suggested, and it was accordingly arranged that he should have a convenient illness. Coming from the son of Mr. Gladstone's old chief, this attack was peculiarly offensive. Lord Hartington was the leader of the House in the absence of Mr. Gladstone, and at the opening of the session he gave notice of a Bill for getting over the Bradlaugh difficulty by amending the Affirmation Act. Mr Bradlaugh was seated under the gallery. He had written to the Speaker that, having taken the oath, he would again present himself for the purpose of taking his seat; but after Lord Hartington's announcement of a Bill he decided to await the fate of that measure. Sir S. Northcote, afraid that he would be outstripped by Lord Randolph Churchill, intimated, without waiting for the production of the Bill, that he would oppose it. Lord Hartington reminded Sir Stafford that two years ago he had stated that the difficulty could only be met by legislation, and he was anxious to know how the right hon. gentleman explained

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

his change of policy. The Tory leader did not say, but every one knew that the true answer was "Lord Randolph Churchill and the Fourth party." The programme of legislation announced in the Royal Speech was very modest in its character—the chief measure being a Bill for preventing corrupt practices at elections. The interest of the public at that time was centred in the prosecution instituted at Dublin against the Invincibles, and the startling evidence given by James Carey, who had turned informer. The revelations at Dublin had naturally a considerable effect on the position of the Irish party. There was not the slightest evidence that even the obscurest member of the party had any connection with the Invincibles, but, as Sir W. Harcourt was reported to have said at the time, "it took the starch out of the boys." Indirectly, of course, the crimes of the Invincibles reflected on the cause of the Nationalists, and it reduced them, for a time at least, to a more subdued mood. They realised that it would be difficult to attack the administration of the Crimes Act with any success. On the other hand, the Opposition determined to turn the revelations regarding the Invincibles to account, and Lord R. Churchill gave notice for Sir John Gorst of an amendment on the Address expressing a hope that no further attempts would be made to purchase the support of disaffected persons by concessions to lawless agitators—a fine, mouth-filling phrase which created much enthusiasm on the Tory benches. In moving the amendment Sir John Gorst made a stinging but reckless speech. It abounded in pungent and telling passages, but one wonders what Sir John Gorst would think of the speech if he read it again after it has lain buried for twenty-nine years. There was an inner circle among the Invincibles, and Sir John genially suggested that there

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

was an inner circle in the Cabinet, and that this circle had its Number One—Number One being an unknown and mysterious figure that emerged now and again in the Dublin trials. This remark was directed, of course, at Mr. Chamberlain. Sir John Gorst was willing to believe that Mr. Parnell was ignorant of the machinations of the Invincibles, and he was equally willing to believe that the Prime Minister was ignorant of the machinations in his own Cabinet. It was a remarkable fact, said the hon. gentleman, that Mr. Forster was the object of both of these organisations. The one aimed at his physical assassination and had been defeated, and the other had been so far successful as to drive him out of the Cabinet. He invited Mr. Parnell to explain his association with T. P. Sheridan, a released suspect whom he had brought forward as an example of the kind of assistance he could give the Government in putting down outrages. Sir John Gorst believed that it was only the leaders of the great Liberal party who could excite the worst passions of the Irish people by profligate promises and unequal legislation, and then attempt to repress the people whom they had stimulated into disaffection by coercive measures which were a disgrace to a free people. Sir W. Harcourt made a very spirited reply. Whether it was becoming the dignity of this great assembly that one of its members should compare the Government of the Queen to a band of assassins, he would leave it not only to the House of Commons but to any body of gentlemen to determine. He defended the action of the Government in releasing the Irish members, and asked the occupants of the front Opposition bench whether they were going to skulk behind the member for Chatham. Mr. Gibson (now Lord Ashbourne) asserted that the Government had availed themselves of the aid of a criminal organisation

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and a suspected criminal. It was not asserted that ministers themselves came into contact with Sheridan; but the suggestion was that the hon. member for Cork put Sheridan in motion, and that the Government allowed him to do it. Mr. Gibson on this occasion quoted from the "last-link speech" of Mr. Parnell, which has since so often figured in Unionist oratory. Mr. Parnell asked the hon. member from what report he quoted, and added that he had no recollection of having used these words. Mr. Gibson was unable to state where he had obtained the report from which he read Mr. Parnell neither admitted nor denied the accuracy of the quotation. My own impression at the time was that he was not sure whether he had used the words or not. If he did they were probably only an oratorical flourish to catch the ears of the groundlings in the United States, but it was unfortunate for his own cause that he did not take the opportunity of denying the sentiment which they contained. Lord R. Churchill made a speech couched in the same vein as that of Sir John Gorst. He went so far as to speak of James Carey the informer as the quondam ally of the Government. This sentence was met, as might have been expected, by loud cries of "Withdraw," but far from doing that the noble lord discussed in a more offensive strain the connection between the Government and Sheridan of Tubercurry and James Carey of Dublin. The great speech of the debate was Mr. Forster's. Since his resignation he had spoken on Irish questions with some degree of reserve and restraint, but on this occasion he let loose the wrath and indignation which he had been nursing for many months. His speech was not only a defence of his conduct—it was an attack more or less direct on his old colleagues and perfectly straight on Mr. Parnell. He told again the story of the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Kilmainham negotiations. He stated that he would not agree to the release of the Irish members because he regarded their assurances as unsatisfactory, and when he added that he did not want the assistance of Sheridan and the organisers of the Land League the Conservative benches sent forth volley after volley of cheers. Mr. Forster, no doubt with considerable satisfaction to himself, did the Government as much harm as he could, but the most effective and dramatic part of his speech was his handling of Mr. Parnell and the Land League. He felt that he was paying off old scores, and he threw his whole strength, which was by no means inconsiderable, into the assault on the Irish leader. The Irish party listened sometimes in awed silence and sometimes with bursts of exasperation to this fearless and terrible indictment of their chief. He bent all his efforts to connect the Land League with the work of outrage and crime. He told Mr. Parnell that a mere disclaimer of connection with outrage would not do. He did not charge the hon. member with having planned outrage and crime, but he attempted to show by a close and consistent train of reasoning that Mr. Parnell had employed the services of men who had publicly advocated outrage. Mr. Parnell was at first calm and impassive, but under Mr. Forster's pitiless recital of the facts he became restless and then extremely pale, as he always did when under the influence of strong feelings. The member for Cork and the member for Longford, Mr. Justin McCarthy, said Mr. Forster, were proprietors of *United Ireland*, which described murder, outrage and arson, as "incidents of the campaign." "The Protection Act," said Mr. Forster, "struck from Mr. Parnell his principal weapon, and enabled me to depose the uncrowned king of Ireland, as the member for Dungarvan called him." Mr. O'Donnell, however,

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

repudiated the statement that it was he who had conferred royal honours on Mr. Parnell. Mr. Forster summed up his case against Mr. Parnell in a single direct and deadly sentence. He charged the member for Cork not with planning or committing outrages, but with conniving at them. This charge was received with indignant shouts from the Irish members. Mr. Parnell said in a suppressed tone across the floor, "It's a lie." The Speaker apparently did not hear the words, but Mr. O'Kelly shouted out "It's a lie" three or four times at the pitch of his voice, and he was at once named and suspended. When Mr. Forster resumed his speech he slightly varied the form of his charge. His accusation was that the member for Cork had either connived at murder, or having learned by facts and statements what was going on he took no trouble to ascertain whether the outrages were due to the language of his agents. "Until the hon. member expresses his regret and repentance for having set on foot such an agitation as this I will hold no communication or conference with him," said Mr. Forster, amidst a torrent of cheers from the Tory benches. It was expected that the Irish leader would rise after the late Chief Secretary. There were loud cries of "Parnell." He made no sign, but late at night he moved the adjournment of the debate. When next day he rose to resume the discussion his party gave him a great reception. He was evidently labouring under feelings of deep and passionate indignation. He did not speak in the quiet, simple and easy style in which he generally addressed the House. His tone was loud and angry. He had some difficulty in keeping within the limits of parliamentary order, and he naturally spoke of Mr. Forster in a tone of ferocious bitterness. He said everything that he could in contempt and vituperation of the late Chief Secretary, but

230

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

he never really grappled with that gentleman's charges. With regard to Sheridan, he declared that he never knew that he was supposed to be connected with outrages. He said that he was not responsible for the writing in the *Irish World*, and that when the passages quoted from *United Ireland* appeared he was in prison. To call Mr. Forster an informer was not to answer his charges. He took up the ground that he had no accusation from which to defend himself. "The hon. gentleman," said Mr. Parnell, "boasted last night that he had deposed me from an imaginary position which he was pleased to assign to me; but I have this consolation, that he has also deposed himself, and that if I fell I had a companion in my fall. We both fell into the ditch together, and I do not think that in the process of getting out of the ditch I suffered in the opinion of my countrymen so much as the right hon. gentleman did in the opinion of his." The Irish leader went on to invite the Government, if they were determined to pursue a policy of relentless coercion, to send back the seasoned politician now in disgrace. "Send him over," he said in a voice shrieking with passion, "to look after the secret inquisition, to superintend the payment of blood-money, and to help Lord Spencer in the congenial work of the gallows." Sir G. Trevelyan, the Chief Secretary, spoke next, and regretted that Mr. Parnell had given no explanation of his connection with those who had encouraged outrage, and in a speech of great bitterness had done his best to dry up all hopes of conciliation. The debate after this possessed no interest, but it was in course of it that Lord Claud Hamilton described Mr. Chamberlain as "the Artful Dodger." Sir John Gorst's amendment was rejected by 259 to 176. Shortly after Mr. Blake—not, I may say, the Canadian statesman who afterwards became a member of the House—announced

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

his severance from the Irish party. He declined to say ditto to Mr. Parnell, and he had received notice to quit. He added amid much laughter that he intended henceforth to speak the truth. The debate on the Address lasted eleven nights.

In the course of the month of March a Bill came on for second reading prohibiting the shooting of pigeons and against keeping tame animals for hunting. It was opposed by Sir Herbert Maxwell, who said that if the principle of this Bill had been adopted in past years foxes would have ceased to exist long ago instead of leading a merry life. Some scepticism was shown as to the merry life. "Yes," said Sir Herbert, "it was a merry life, for the fox lived six months of the year entirely unmolested on condition of taking during the other six months an occasional dance." Mr. Forster, who supported the Bill, told the House that his sporting achievements had been confined to the shooting of a cat, but the right hon. gentleman's profession of humanity was received with some signs of incredulity by the Irish members. The Bill also received the support of Lord R. Churchill, who gave the House a painful description of the torturing of pigeons at Monte Carlo, and denounced stag-hunting. He was told that if this Bill passed the master of buckhounds might be brought before a court. "What of that?" said Lord Randolph. "The persons who chiefly followed the buckhounds were counter-jumpers and those who were generally designated by the name 'Arry,' and in the East End of London the buckhounds were known as 'Arry's Hounds.'"

For some time the proceedings in Parliament were comparatively quiet and unimportant, but Lord R. Churchill created a considerable flutter in the political world by a letter in the *Times* in which he coolly proposed

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that Sir S. Northcote should be deposed, and suggested by inference that he himself should become the leader of the Opposition in the Commons. The history of the Conservative leadership, he said, had for three years been the history of lost opportunities, of pusillanimity, of vacillation, dread of responsibility, repression and discouragement of hard-working followers (meaning, of course, the Fourth party), collusions with the Government, hankering after coalition, and want of perception. A more damning indictment against a leader it would be impossible to bring. The Tories, if they were in a negative frame of mind, might accept Sir S. Northcote, if in a cautious frame of mind they might take Lord Cairns, but if they were in an English frame of mind they would rally round Lord Salisbury. He himself was in favour of Lord Salisbury, against whom were directed all the malignant efforts of envious mediocrity. He was the one man who was capable not only of overturning but of replacing Mr. Gladstone. Lord Randolph did not expressly suggest in his letter who was to be the Tory leader in the Commons, but every one who read it gathered that he had named himself for that position, and when Lord Salisbury came into power in 1886 he was selected for it. The letter created great indignation among the members of the Conservative party, and helped to restore the waning authority of Sir S. Northcote. An address expressing confidence in his leadership was signed by over two hundred members of the party, including all the members of the Fourth party except Lord R. Churchill.

Serious explosions had taken place at the Government offices in Whitehall, and dynamite and other explosive substances had been found at Birmingham and London. Sir W. Harcourt introduced a measure dealing with the possession of explosives, which had rather a striking

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

course. The Irish party were the only persons who might have offered it any opposition, and they very wisely abstained from doing anything of the kind. Sir W. Harcourt declared that the measure was urgent, and it went through all its stages in a few hours. It was sent to the Lords, where its passage was equally rapid. Lord Salisbury said something about the dangers of panic legislation, but he offered no opposition. Next day at noon it received the Royal Assent, so that only eighteen hours elapsed between its introduction and its reaching the Statute Book.

A Bill was introduced conferring annuities (subsequently changed into capital sums) on Lord Wolseley and Lord Alcester (Sir Beauchamp Seymour) for their services in the Egyptian War. The Bill was opposed by Mr. Labouchere and Sir W. Lawson, the latter of whom described the Government as marching into Egypt to the tune of "We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do." Lord Randolph supported the Bill because, as he understood, it was approved by Sir S. Northcote; but whether this was a real or a sarcastic resumption of his loyalty to his leader no one quite knew.

The Affirmation Bill introduced by the Government came on for second reading on April 23. Sir R. Cross, who moved its rejection, described it as a despicable manœuvre for getting Mr. Bradlaugh into the House. They ought not to be driven into admitting an avowed atheist any more than an alien and a woman. Mr. Gladstone's speech on the second reading was remarkable even among his efforts for its power and its elevation of tone. He raised the whole question to a higher level than it had reached in any of the previous debates. They knew, he said, the difficulty of fighting for what they believed to be strict justice in association with

234

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Bradlaugh, but the difficulty was the measure of their duty and honour. Catholic emancipation had been carried in opposition to the opinion of the people by a combination of statesmen, but he had evidently no expectation of such a patriotic conjunction on the present occasion. He alluded in an impressive passage to the injury that the question was doing to the Liberal party. "Do you suppose," he said, addressing the Opposition, "that we do not know that in every contested election you have gained votes and we have lost them?" and the question was answered by cheers and counter cheers. The Liberal party had suffered and was suffering on account of this question, but in every struggle for the extension of religious toleration the Liberal party had suffered. He told the Conservatives that their whole attitude was disparaging to Christianity and that in their view only theism was essential. Voltaire, whose watchword was *Écrasez l'infâme* ("Stamp out Christianity"), would have been admitted under the present oath. He held that if before admitting a member to the House they imposed not only certain secular conditions but the necessity of adopting certain religious words, they gave him an inducement, if not a bribe, not only to tamper with his convictions but to do violence to them in order that he might not be shut out from the noblest privilege of Englishmen, the right of representing his fellows in Parliament. Then came the splendid passage in which he showed that the Opposition were drawing an untenable distinction between theism and Christianity on the one side, and atheism on the other. He quoted the lines from Lucretius describing the gods as living remote from and indifferent to human affairs. "The House," says Lord Morley in his *Life of Gladstone*, "though but few, perhaps, recollected their Lucretius or had ever even

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

read him, sat, as I well remember, with reverential stillness hearkening from this born master of moving cadence and high sustained modulation, 'to the rise and long roll of the hexameter,' to the plangent lines that have come down across the night of time to us from great Rome." The whole argument of the speech was pitched in the loftiest vein, and in language and delivery it was worthy of the great theme which it handled. To Mr. Gladstone's impressive reasoning Mr. Gibson could find nothing better to say than that the object of the measure seemed to be to drive the Supreme Being out of the House of Commons in order to admit Mr. Bradlaugh. Lord R. Churchill spoke on the second reading in a somewhat more serious vein than he had done before; but still the spectacle of the noble lord posing as a champion of Christianity in opposition to Mr. Gladstone had something of the ludicrous. He compared Mr. Gladstone to the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, and said that if Origen or Bede could return they would be eclipsed by the Prime Minister. He protested against altering the law in the interests of the man who represented the scum and the rabble and not the respectable classes. Stripped of all its apparent objects this was a Bill to admit avowed atheists to Parliament. To compare Mr. Bradlaugh to the Jews was an insult to the ancient people. The noble lord was followed by Mr. Labouchere, who quoted with much effect Lord Randolph's statement in the *Times* that Sir S. Northcote was prepared to support the Government in the Bradlaugh case until Lord Beaconsfield, on being appealed to, gave his approval to the action of the Fourth party. The most amusing version of the Bill was given by an Irish member, who said that Mr. Gladstone proposed to abolish God and trust to providence. The second

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

reading of the Bill was rejected by a majority of three, and the Opposition found it difficult to give sufficient expression to their delight at their victory. When the tellers for the "Noes" came in a shout of "Won" ran along the Opposition benches, and as soon as the paper containing the numbers was handed to the Tory Whip the Conservatives sprang to their feet, waved their hats and cheered and shouted for several minutes. Their enthusiasm was in part due to their hope that the rejection of the Bill would lead to the resignation of the Government. Ministers, however, accepted the decision of the House, and henceforth so far as the present Parliament was concerned regarded the Bradlaugh controversy as at an end. When the House met next day the Opposition expected that the Prime Minister would have something to say on the matter, but he made no allusion to the division of the previous night. On May 4 Mr. Bradlaugh again asked to be allowed to take the oath. Sir S. Northcote made the customary motion that he should not be allowed to go through the form of taking the oath, and this was carried by a large majority. Mr. Bradlaugh did not attempt to enter into a physical struggle with the officers of the House. In February this year Mr. John Morley had been elected for Newcastle, and Mr. Labouchere in speaking on Sir S. Northcote's motion suggested that the hon. member held the same opinions as Professor Huxley, and declared that it was monstrous to admit him and shut out Mr. Bradlaugh. On one of the other occasions when the member for Northampton claimed to be sworn Mr. Labouchere said he might have as well objected to Mr. Balfour taking the oath after his re-election on appointment to office, on the ground that he had written a highly sceptical book. Mr. Balfour gave an emphatic contradiction to the statement

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that he had written an anti-religious book, and told the hon. member that either he had never read it or was wholly incapable of understanding it.

It was in this session that the House of Commons was invited for the last time to intervene and stop a threatened duel. The last affair of the kind had been the challenge addressed by The O'Donoghue to Sir Robert Peel for speaking of certain Irish members as "mannikin traitors." Lord Palmerston had with considerable tact and dexterity extricated his colleague from the difficulty. In this instance Mr. McCoan said that he had received what seemed to be a challenge from Mr. O'Kelly. It appeared that Mr. McCoan in addressing his constituents had said that the House of Commons was supposed to be an assembly of gentlemen, and that Mr. O'Kelly's action in giving the lie to Mr. Forster did not meet with his approval. Thereupon Mr. O'Kelly addressed a warlike message to Mr. McCoan, telling him that Mr. O'Brien was authorised to act for him (O'Kelly), and asking the hon. member to name his man. Mr. McCoan solicited the intervention of Mr. Parnell, but that gentleman declined to assume the office of peacemaker. He hardly could, seeing that he himself had used the same words as Mr. O'Kelly. Mr. Gladstone told the House that Mr. McCoan had given a pledge that he would not proceed further in the matter, and he suggested that the other party to the quarrel should adopt the same course. Mr. O'Kelly was not in the House, and Mr. Gladstone asked Mr. O'Brien whether he would be present next day. To this courteous question the hon. member savagely replied that the Irish members would settle their own quarrels. A motion was then proposed and carried that Mr. O'Kelly do attend in his place next day. The hon. member duly appeared in the House, and when

238

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the question came on delivered a rather warlike speech. He knew that any punishment that the House could inflict on him would be trivial, and it was safe therefore to talk in a defiant and truculent style. He denied that the House had any jurisdiction in the matter, and there was an ironical laugh when he said that it concerned only his own honour and dignity. A man who deliberately insulted another and then refused to apologise or afford reparation had put himself outside the category of honourable men. The last sentence was of course addressed to Mr. McCoan, but it was so ingeniously framed that it escaped the intervention of the Speaker. Mr. Gladstone lamented the tone which the hon. member had adopted. He had told them that he cared little for the opinion of the House; but that, said Mr. Gladstone, was not a matter on which its dignity and character would ultimately depend. Mr. O'Kelly having stated that he had no intention to proceed further in the matter the Prime Minister advised the House to let it drop.

The long-smouldering quarrel between Sir S. Northcote and Lord R. Churchill came to a head on a Bill conferring a grant on Lord Alcester, who as Sir Beauchamp Seymour had conducted the naval operations at Alexandria. Sir W. Lawson opposed the grant, and said that the massacres at Alexandria which had led to the action of the British fleet were due to the Khedive, and Lord R. Churchill expressed his agreement with this view. He believed that it could be proved that the Khedive was responsible for these massacres, and he asked for an independent inquiry. Sir S. Northcote expressed his great regret at the course taken by Sir W. Lawson and Lord R. Churchill. He spoke with some feeling, and was subjected throughout to derisive cheers and jeers from Lord Randolph. He

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

refused, he said, to be led into a discussion of these topics by the noble lord, and the great bulk of the Opposition cheered. "I decline," said Sir Stafford, with increased emphasis, "to be led by the noble lord," at which there were ironical cheers from the Fourth party and louder cheers from the general body of the Conservatives. The conduct of Lord Randolph and his colleagues deeply affected the leader of the Opposition, and the closing sentences of his speech were delivered with some passion. - He repeated that he would not be led by the noble lord, and he hoped that the House would not be led by him into a position which was degrading to its honour. Sir Stafford sat down rather abruptly, and the impression at the time was that he was so much moved and annoyed that he did not finish his speech. The incident was regarded at the time as the proclamation of open war—secret hostilities had been going on for a long time—between the leader of the Opposition and the Fourth party.

A heated discussion took place in the Commons on June 12 on the execution in Egypt of Suleiman Sami. Lord R. Churchill described it with a magnificent breadth of assertion as the grossest judicial murder which had stained the annals of Oriental justice. Mr. Gladstone gave him a good drubbing. The accusations of the noble lord, he said, became more unmeasured and his assertions more sweeping in proportion to what he found to be the nullity of his case. He expressed a wish that Lord Randolph would speak under a sense of responsibility, and not cast shameful and scandalous accusations on public men both English and Egyptian. This rebuke was loudly cheered, but so far as Lord Randolph himself was concerned Mr. Gladstone might as well have spoken to the mace.

In a speech at Birmingham Mr. Bright had com-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

mented freely on the conduct of the Conservatives in Parliament, and had charged them with uniting with the "rebel Irish party" in obstructing business. He had even suggested that there was an alliance between the two branches of the Opposition. Sir S. Northcote called attention to this statement as a question of privilege, but if he expected that he would get anything in the nature of apology or explanation he was disappointed. Mr. Bright spoke indeed, but throughout his speech there was a hardly concealed scorn for the way in which the leaders of the Opposition were being dragged at the tail of the Fourth party. He vindicated his right to speak with freedom to his constituents, and with regard to the word "alliance" the leader of the Opposition might be thankful that he did not use the word "treaty." He spoke of the way in which certain members were constantly rising and clamouring at the Prime Minister in a manner quite unknown in his younger days. This was, of course, a reference to the Fourth party, and in justification of his language he quoted a passage from a speech of Lord R. Churchill in which he described the ministry as a Government of impostors whose every act was a fraud or an imposture. His reference to the Irish party he defended on the ground that the Conservatives were associated with a body whose object was to dethrone the sovereignty of the Queen in Ireland. Mr. T. P. O'Connor retorted on Mr. Bright that he was a converted rebel, and said that the love which he formerly professed for Ireland had been converted into implacable hatred. When he went on to say that in Mr. Bright's case a mean and vain old age had succeeded to a manhood of justice, the House showed intense anger, and it was some time before Mr. O'Connor could proceed. It is only right to say that the hon. gentleman more than atoned for

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

this rather acrimonious attack on Mr. Bright by delivering in November last a fine tribute to his character and services.

On Saturday, August 18, the House met at noon and sat right on till twenty minutes past two on Sunday morning. This was the first time that the House had encroached to such a great extent on the day of rest since the year 1866. In that year a Bill was hurriedly passed suspending the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland, and it received the Royal Assent on Sunday morning. On the present occasion the day was spent in company with the Nationalists, and Mr. Healy assailed in a style of fierce invective without recent example Lord Spencer and Sir George Trevelyan. They acted, he said, on the motto "Let justice perish and the Castle prevail." The Government proceeded on the principle that all Irishmen were liars except the constabulary, and the only witnesses they could get were infamous women and prostitutes. If the Chief Secretary had been in office in Cromwell's time he would have got up and defended with just as much aplomb the spitting of Irish babes on English bayonets. In reply to this speech Mr. Gladstone spoke under the influence of strong feeling, but with great dignity and restraint. He made an attempt to reach the higher nature of Mr. Healy, Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Biggar, and to discover what ideas underlay their ferocious utterances. He appealed to Mr. Healy and his friends whether they hoped to gain anything by the envenomed violence of their language. When he asked the hon. member whether he really believed that the Chief Secretary would defend the spitting of babies on bayonets, that gentleman replied "Yes." Mr. Gladstone, "He does." Mr. Healy, "Yes, I believe he would defend them." It is difficult to believe that Mr. Healy said these things, but there the language

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

stands in the gruesome veracity of the printed record. Mr. Biggar almost surpassed Mr. Healy. Mr. Gladstone in a touching passage observed that in a man of his years his personal interest in these matters must be of short duration. "Hear, hear," said Mr. Biggar, in happy and gleeful anticipation of the close of Mr. Gladstone's life. This display of savagery outraged the House. Cries of "Shame" rose on every side, and even some of the Irish members turned to remonstrate with their colleague. Unmoved by Mr. Biggar's interruption Mr. Gladstone went on to say that if this were the last time he were addressing the House he would appeal to members to express their views in a manner more agreeable to the traditions of the House of Commons and even to the religion which they professed. He might as well have addressed his expostulations to the wind. Mr. Healy, Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Biggar spoke subsequently and flung the appeal back with scorn and taunts. Mr. Healy treated it as a mere bit of sentiment. It was no more germane to the question than in the case where one man knocked down another would be a person saying to the man underneath, "Little children, love one another." Mr. O'Brien hotly declared that the Government were attempting to degrade their political opponents to the level of criminals. Probably when Mr. Healy read what he had said next morning he remembered that it had been written by high authority that "the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." The defence of the Nationalists, if defence it could be called, was that the administration of the Coercion Act was so unjust and so severe that they were entitled to go any length to bring it before the House.

CHAPTER XXI

1884

THE year 1884 was the year of the third great Reform Bill, but Parliament was almost as much concerned with Egypt as with the franchise. In the recess there had been a strong agitation in favour of the extension of the suffrage to the counties, and at the meeting of the National Liberal Federation Mr. Morley had moved a resolution urging the introduction of a measure with this object in the coming session. The Government readily responded to the demand, and on the opening day of the session Mr. Gladstone gave notice of a Bill for the extension of the occupying franchise to the counties. Egypt, however, was at first the subject that mainly engaged the attention of Parliament, and Mr. Gladstone stated somewhere about Easter that there had already been seventeen discussions on Egyptian affairs. Strangely enough a debate on Egypt, which was opened on the first night of the session by Mr. Bourke, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the previous Government, collapsed. Mr. Bourke, who moved an amendment on the Address, spoke till near dinner-hour, and Sir Charles Dilke, who was to have replied, did not care to speak to empty benches. No one else rising to speak, the question was at once put, and Mr. Bourke's amendment was rejected by 77 to 20. The next night Lord R. Churchill gave notice of an amendment asking the Queen to dismiss her ministers in consequence of their Egyptian policy. Its language

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

was so extravagant that it was received with laughter, and it was ruled out of order on the ground that it covered the same ground as Mr. Bourke's amendment. Lord Randolph then moved the adjournment of the House, and proceeded to attack the Government with his accustomed vigour. He declared—and declared quite truly—that it was monstrous that a minister should consider it beneath his dignity to speak in the dinner-hour. He dwelt on the calculated evasions and pusillanimous conduct of the Government. Mr. Chaplin also described their policy as mean and pettifogging. Mr. Gladstone treated these attacks with some disdain, and stated that the Government were the greatest sufferers from the premature close of the debate on the previous night. He denied the doctrine that at whatever hour a vote of no confidence in the Government was proposed it was the duty of the minister whose policy was attacked at once to reply to it. Where were the accusers of the Government, he asked, at the time of the collapse of the debate? They only mustered twenty in the lobby, and he did not believe that there were ten in the House.

In the course of the debate on the Address Mr. Parnell moved an amendment with reference to the administration of affairs in Ireland and severely criticised the action of the Government. He complained of the suppression of meetings and of the favour shown to Orangemen. Lord Crichton, on the other hand, denounced the Government for their treatment of Orangemen, and in particular criticised the suspension of Lord Rossmore from the magistracy. Lord R. Churchill, who had sometimes his flirtations with the Irish party and appeared occasionally to sympathise with their objections to coercion, went on the other tack on this occasion. He opened a vigorous fire on the Nationalists. The

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

suspension of Lord Rossmore he described as a bait to the Irish party. He charged Mr. Parnell with levying taxes on the Irish people, and declared that Mr. Gladstone confounded loyalty to himself with loyalty to the Crown. On this occasion the attack on the Government was not pressed with much force.

On February 8 Mr. Bradlaugh again attempted to take the oath, amidst a scene of great excitement and tumult. He was introduced by Mr. Labouchere and Mr. Burt, and advancing to the table with a Testament in his hand repeated the words of the oath and was left by his sponsors standing on the floor. He was ordered by the Speaker to withdraw; the usual resolution was proposed by Sir S. Northcote, and in speaking on it Mr. Labouchere said that the Opposition were simply using Mr. Bradlaugh to waste time. He profoundly irritated the Conservatives by saying that the closing words of the oath were an unmeaning incantation such as an African might address to Mumbo Jumbo. It dawned on the Opposition that if a division were taken Mr. Bradlaugh might vote. Various attempts were made to get him excluded from the House, but without success, and on a division being taken he voted with the "Noes." Mr. O'Donnell talked about a collusion between the Government and Mr. Bradlaugh in order to secure the admission of an atheist. A second resolution was carried excluding the hon. member from the precincts of the House, and in this division Mr. Bradlaugh also voted. The next day he accepted the Chiltern Hundreds and a new writ was issued for Northampton.

I shall not further follow Mr. Bradlaugh through his parliamentary adventures. Several times he attempted to take the oath, but he never surmounted the barricade which the Tory party placed in the way of his admission to the Parliament of 1880. When he was again chosen

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

as one of the members for Northampton at the General Election of 1885 Mr. Speaker Peel, acting as I think Speaker Brand should have done, declined to allow any one to intervene before he took the oath. Sir M. H. Beach and Lord R. Churchill were incapable of preventing him from being sworn, but if his presence in Parliament was "an outrage on the immortal God" they ought to have moved his expulsion. In one of his speeches the noble lord had said that the new Parliament would be seized of the fact that Mr. Bradlaugh was an atheist, and in his view, therefore, it was entitled to get rid of one whose presence was pollution. But neither he nor Sir M. H. Beach moved in the matter. The truth is that Mr. Bradlaugh had served the purposes of the Tory party. He was used as a weapon to attack Mr. Gladstone and discredit Liberalism during the 1880 Parliament; and after fulfilling that end the Tories had no further need of him. Mr. Bradlaugh became a useful member of Parliament. The Tories discovered that he had many good points. He was a strong individualist, and he described the Socialists as consisting "of a few poets and a few idiots, and some to whom we could not apply so kindly words." Finally, when he lay on his deathbed, the resolution of parliamentary ostracism which had been passed against him was rescinded, and good old Tories like Sir Walter Barttelot almost wept over the wrong they had done him.

The question of Egyptian policy turned mainly on the retention or abandonment of the Soudan. The Government had given up the idea of permanently holding the region of the upper Nile, but they felt bound to do something to rescue the Egyptian garrison that had been left there. "Rescue and retire" was the phrase in which their policy became embodied. "Advance and civilise" was the watchword of the other party. The Govern-

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

ment had made the profound mistake of sending out General Gordon to the Soudan with the view of persuading the Arabs to allow the garrisons to leave peacefully. He had a great influence over the Soudan tribes, and he enjoyed the respect and admiration which in this country are always given to a great Puritan soldier. Every one now admits that the mission was quixotic and dangerous. Gordon probably overrated his own influence with the natives of the Soudan, and the Government ought to have seen that if he failed and himself was shut up with one of the imprisoned garrisons it would greatly increase their difficulties. Still, the spectacle of this simple and solitary soldier riding off on his camel into the desert in order to accomplish by his personal influence the work of a great military expedition touched the imagination of the country and the world. The Egyptian policy of the Government was challenged in both Houses. In the Commons the debate on the Address was suspended in order to allow the vote of censure to be moved. In defending the Government Mr. Gladstone described General Gordon as a hero and a Christian, and in his dealings with Oriental people a genius. In this speech he explained in detail all that the Government had done or intended to do, and though it has been surpassed by some subsequent achievements it was then considered a remarkable performance for a man of seventy-five. The general tone of the speech was buoyant and sanguine in spite of the somewhat uncertain position of affairs in the Soudan. It was delivered at the close of a day of hard work. Mr. Gladstone had been in his office in the early part of the day. He had taken part in a Cabinet Council which lasted till question time. He was in the House when the writ for Northampton was moved and discussed; and yet at nine o'clock after

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

twelve hours of nearly continuous work he delivered a speech which might have tried a man of fifty, and looked as little fatigued as his younger colleagues. Sir W. Lawson in this debate lamented the setting up of the dual control in Egypt, and created much amusement by referring to difficulties which Sir S. Northcote had experienced from the dual control at home. As for the Khedive, said Sir Wilfrid, he had neither heart, head nor courage, and the only thing to be said in his favour was that he had only one wife. He described the policy of the Government as one of "rescue and retirement," and this description Mr. Gladstone accepted with some qualification. Then Mr. Forster made a speech which gave great delight to the Opposition. His principle was "advance and civilise," and he said that if the Government had ordered troops for the relief of the garrisons after they became responsible for the Government of Egypt the massacres on the Red Sea littoral would not have taken place. Mr. Morley differed from the view of Mr. Forster, and said that he distinguished British interests from British delusions. He argued against the annexation of Egypt, and said that if they adopted that measure Russia would advance into Asia Minor and Austria into the Balkan Peninsula. Mr. Balfour created much indignation among the Government and their supporters by suggesting that they had watched brave men perish with philosophic calm. In the division on the vote of censure the Parnellites voted with the Tories, and it was rejected by a majority of 49. The debate on the Address, which had been interrupted by the vote of censure, was resumed, Mr. Parnell's amendment being under discussion. It was on this occasion that Mr. O'Connor Power broke away from the Parnell dictatorship. He criticised freely the action of his old colleagues, and spoke with a sense

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of personal grievance. He had been robbed of his freedom because the Parnellites would not allow him to address meetings of his own constituents, and said that the Irish leader had surrounded himself with a set of persons to whom a state of peace in Ireland would be a sentence of obscurity. Mr. Healy replied to Mr. Power, and the best passage in his speech was a quotation from a deliverance of that gentleman in 1878 in which he described the process by which an Irish patriot was converted into a ministerialist. "It was melancholy," said Mr. Power on that occasion, "to observe how the patriot falls. There were few to remind him of his duty, and the power of the seducer was great. It is easy to perceive that an internal struggle is going on, for he has the look of a man who is trying to make himself think that he is doing right but cannot succeed and is ashamed of himself. The first dangerous symptom is the evident anxiety on the part of the member to be alone with the Government Whip. If you happen to pass he assumes the air of easy indifference and utters a monosyllable in a loud voice, but an evening or two later when the Government can scarcely scrape together a majority the patriot votes with them, and remarks to his friend the Whip that it was a close thing. From that he goes to worse. Taking courage to himself that nobody knows him in the great world of London he gets up early, slips down a back way to the Treasury, and then all is over." This lively sketch, which was read by Mr. Healy with much delight, of the decline and fall of a patriot greatly amused the House, and indeed was almost the only interesting thing in the debate on the Irish policy of the Government.

In a speech which lasted an hour and fifty minutes Mr. Gladstone introduced the Bill for extending household franchise to counties, and justified the proposal on the

250

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

broad principle which he first enunciated in 1864, that "the comprehension of capable citizens within the Constitution added to the strength of the State." He defended the policy of the Government in not overloading the Bill with a scheme of redistribution, and it was on this issue that the controversy on the measure mainly turned

On Sunday, March 1, news arrived that General Graham in a battle near Tokar had defeated the Arabs with heavy loss. Next day Sir W. Lawson moved the adjournment of the House, and in an extremely passionate speech attacked the Government for making war on the Arabs. He asked why they had slaughtered thousands of these people, and what quarrel they had with them. He quoted passages from Mr. Gladstone's speeches against carrying on war for military glory or for vindictive objects. These eloquent denunciations spoken in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility were received with unmeasured delight by the Opposition. Mr. Gladstone replied to this attack more in sorrow than in anger. He understood the motives of his honourable friend, and had never used a phrase towards him except those of mildness and respect. He told Sir W. Lawson that on account of the sacredness of the object which he had in view he was at liberty to pour on the policy of the Government all the violent rancour that he liked. Sir W. Lawson seemed rather astonished at this example of turning the other cheek to the smiter—a practice which is rarer among politicians than even among theologians. Mr. Gladstone warmly denied that the Government had undertaken military operations for vindictive objects. Lord R. Churchill appeared on this occasion as the ally of Sir W. Lawson, and expressed his surprise that none of the Radical members had risen to support the hon. baronet.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

“ I have said it in the country and will say it again that the Radical party is all humbug.” He spoke with great vehemence against what he called the ruthless and unnecessary slaughter of the Arabs.

It was on March 11 of this year that Tennyson took his seat in the House of Lords, and later in the session he voted in favour of the County Franchise Bill. He very rarely appeared in the Upper House, and on the Home Rule question he separated himself from the policy of the Liberal party, with which indeed he had never been in very active sympathy.

The House met on Saturday, March 16, at noon, and sat right on till a quarter to six on Sunday morning. This late sitting was due to the obstructive action of both sections of the Opposition on the Consolidated Fund Bill. Mr. Parnell and his friends never concealed the fact that their object was to destroy the Government and bring the Parliament to an end, and at this sitting Mr. Bourke said almost in so many words that the Opposition would endeavour to make government impossible until there had been an appeal to the country. The discussions turned partly on Ireland and partly on the Egyptian policy of the Government. During the early part of the day most of the members of the Government were absent owing to a Cabinet Council, and this formed a subject of bitter complaint on the part of the Opposition. When Lord R. Churchill was speaking only Sir C. Dilke (now a member of the Cabinet) and Lord E. Fitzmaurice were present. Sir Charles explained that a Cabinet Council was sitting. “ What care we for a Cabinet Council sitting ? ” said Lord Randolph, who evidently thought his invective would be lost unless it were hurled at a full bench of ministers. His most effective point was the quotation from one of Mr. Gladstone’s Midlothian speeches about the Zulus offering their naked

252

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

bodies to the sword. He invited the Prime Minister to go down to Midlothian and redeliver the speech, substituting North Africa for South Africa. It was in the course of this sitting that "the dirty trick" scene arose. An amendment moved by Mr. Labouchere to the second reading of the Bill was defeated only by a majority of 17, and there was much cheering and counter cheering. While the House was still surging with excitement Sir M. H. Beach rose and informed the Chairman that he had heard the Home Secretary say that "this dirty trick has not succeeded." The language expressed a little too bluntly the sentiments of the Liberals, for the division was undoubtedly a snap one, and on its repetition by Sir M. H. Beach it was received with much cheering from the Liberal benches. Sir S. Northcote considered the words as the grossest possible insult to those on his side of the House. Sir W. Harcourt endeavoured to soothe the ruffled feelings of the Tory leader, and said that he had no desire to be offensive. On Sunday morning Mr. Healy threatened to prolong the discussion indefinitely. Thinking for the moment that it was August instead of March, he said that "the Irish members had no birds to shoot." "Landlords," said a voice from the Liberal benches. The word, of course, made the Nationalists very angry. It was not known at first who used it, but ultimately Mr. Lyulph Stanley (the present Lord Sheffield) admitted that he was the offender, and unequivocally expressed his regret.

We have seen Lord R. Churchill frequently in his Tory mood. On May 19 he made a speech on the Leasehold Enfranchisement Bill, in which he revealed more distinctly than before what he meant by democratic Toryism. The Bill was opposed by the Attorney-General (Sir H. James), and Lord Randolph told him that he had spoken as the representative of the great

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Whig dukes who had covered London with bloated estates. He held it to be necessary to break up estates in large towns. No freedom of contract, said the noble lord, existed in Belgravia. He astonished the Tory squires by saying that he liked to clash against the Miocene and Pliocene formations of sub-diluvian Toryism. Unless the Tory party showed the capacity and willingness to deal with these social questions it would be long before they would cross the floor of the House. Colonel Dawnay, speaking a little later, said that Lord R. Churchill's Tory democracy was rank Socialism.

Another debate took place on the affairs of the Soudan in the last week of March, and in the course of it Lord R. Churchill assailed the Government with a superabundance of rhetorical invective. General Gordon had appointed Zebehr Pacha, a notorious slave-dealer, to assist him in restoring order in the Soudan, and the Government had not at that time vetoed the appointment. Lord Randolph denounced Zebehr as an abandoned scoundrel; and he was evidently produced to suggest a comparison with Ahmet Aga and Chefkit Pacha, who were the objects of Mr. Gladstone's eloquent attacks during the Anti-Turkish campaign. He described the policy of the Government as the perpetuation of slavery and the perpetuation of massacre. In the same style of unmeasured violence he spoke of the coldness, indifference, callousness and heartlessness of Her Majesty's Government. To his own leaders he was contemptuously sarcastic. He would be their bitterest enemy if he did anything to throw on these blameless and respectable gentlemen the duty of clearing up the muddle and the mess which existed on the banks of the Nile. Mr. Labouchere contributed an epigram to the debate. The policy of the Government, he said, was not "Rescue and retire" but "Ravage and remain." Sir

254

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

W. Lawson stated that Christian newspapers were supporting the war, and he read to the astonishment of some of the supporters of the Government an extract from a weekly organ of Nonconformity: "People should trust God and His ministers, Gladstone and Gordon." All these attacks left the position of the Government undisturbed.

On the second reading of the Franchise Bill Lord J. Manners moved an amendment, the object of which was to postpone that stage of the Bill until the production of the scheme of Redistribution. Mr. Chamberlain made a speech in this debate full of the fire of his Radical days. He referred to a declaration of Lord R. Churchill at Edinburgh in which the noble Lord said that if he saw the agricultural labourers in a state of great excitement holding mass meetings, neglecting their work, marching to London and tearing down the Hyde Park railings, then he would know that they wanted the franchise. Mr. Chamberlain described this language as a direct incitement to disorder; and Mr. Healy interjected that if the noble lord had used it in Ireland he would have been put in gaol. On this occasion Mr. Chamberlain angered the country gentlemen almost beyond restraint by saying that the agricultural labourers had been robbed of their lands, of their rights on commons, and of their open spaces. These proceedings he said were going on still, and the agricultural labourers were still being robbed. Let the House of Lords reject the Bill, said the member for Birmingham, and let the country decide between us. Sir Robert Peel, who had just been returned for Huntingdonshire as a Tory, described this speech as the most mischievous, the most inflammatory, and the most ill-conditioned ever delivered from the Treasury bench by a Cabinet Minister, and a direct appeal to the worst passions that

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

could be engendered by poverty and ignorance. The second reading of the Franchise Bill was carried by 340 to 210.

The Egyptian question, more than even the Franchise Bill, continued to absorb the attention of Parliament. On April 3 Lord Hartington announced that the Government would undertake no military operations for establishing any government in the Soudan—a statement loudly cheered by their supporters. Sir S. Northcote at once moved the adjournment of the House and denounced the policy of the Government. Mr. Gladstone replied in a speech of remarkable force. He told the House that this was the seventeenth night on which the question of Egypt had been debated. He charged the Opposition with attempting to drag the country blindfold into immense responsibilities; and declared that these responsibilities would not be assumed without the country knowing what they were doing. The object of the Tory party, he said, was to consume the time of Parliament in order to weaken by all the means in their power the resources of the House in regard to the question of the Franchise.

On the motion for the Easter adjournment Mr. Healy was speaking with reference to the case of a prisoner in Ireland, and noticing the Chief smile he said it was all very well for the right hon. gentleman to smile at the sufferings of an innocent prisoner. “That is an absolute falsehood,” said Sir George Trevelyan. The Speaker gave Mr. Healy a severe wiggling. He had charged the Government with conniving at murder, and his reference to the Chief Secretary had been couched in language which one member ought not to use to another. He warned the hon. member that he might have to resort to the powers with which the House had invested him in order to prevent a public scandal. Sir G. Trevelyan

256

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

explained the circumstances under which he had used the words, and withdrew them.

On May 5 a telegram was received from General Gordon, which greatly added to the difficulty and gravity of the Egyptian question. It became known as "the indelible disgrace" telegram, and as it seriously affected the course of events in Parliament, it may be given here. It was addressed to Sir E. Baring at Cairo, and ran thus—

"You state your intention of not sending any relief up here or to Berber, and you refuse me Zebehr. I consider myself free to act according to circumstances. I shall hold on here as long as I can. If I can suppress the rebellion I shall do so. If I can't, I shall retire to the Equator and leave you the indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Sennar, Kassala, Berber and Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under great difficulties if you would retain peace in Egypt."

This telegram produced a great impression on the public mind. It compelled the Government to send a relief expedition up the Nile, and naturally it led to a resolution of censure in the House of Commons, moved by Sir M. H. Beach. In speaking on this motion Mr. Gladstone protested against the policy of putting down the Mahdi, not merely on the ground of its cost, but because, using a phrase which became famous, it would be "a war against a people rightly struggling to be free." This was a view of the movement in the Soudan which surprised the House and the country, and which, so far as I know, was never supported by facts. Mr. Gladstone then went into the history of the Gordon mission. He showed that it was essentially a pacific one, and that General Gordon had never received any authority to turn it into a mission of war and bloodshed. He evidently

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

did not desire to say anything that could be construed into a censure of General Gordon, and though he made no definite promise that an expedition would be sent out for his relief he gave the impression that that course would be adopted. He repudiated the policy of conquering the Soudan, but some of his supporters were surprised at his reserve with regard to the position of General Gordon. The next day Lord R. Churchill made one of the speeches of his career. Its strong but balanced rhetoric, its alliterative abuse, had all the signs of careful preparation, and it was delivered with an energy and force which roused the enthusiasm of the Tory party and made them overlook his previous escapades. He assumed that the Prime Minister's speech meant the final definite abandonment of Gordon, and he proceeded to denounce that course with much strength and wealth of language. In his declaration with regard to Gordon the Prime Minister had announced the fall of his Government. Lord Randolph compared Mr. Gladstone to Pontius Pilate, who 1884 years ago—it should have been 1854 years—washed his hands in the face of the multitude, and so he implied the right hon. gentleman was washing his hands of Gordon. The Prime Minister had refused to send Zebehr solely because he was afraid that he would be put in a minority in this House. The Government had spent millions in rescuing a dirty little plague-spot like Suakim, but it would not send any assistance to General Gordon. Rhetorically the most effective part of the speech was his contrast between the neglect by this Government of the Christian hero and the enormous efforts made by the Prime Minister in support of a seditious blasphemer like Mr. Bradlaugh. Some surprise was felt that the Speaker took no notice of this language; but Mr. Bradlaugh not being actually a member of the House he was outside the protection of

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the Chair. Sir W. Lawson, however, rose to order, and then Lord Randolph, having made what he called an historical parallel, withdrew it. Gordon, said the noble lord, in the grand style of Disraeli, was the envoy of his country. He was sacred in the eyes of the country, and if we failed to support him it was a certain indication of a decaying empire. He contrasted the conduct of Mr. Gladstone on this occasion with that of Lord Beaconsfield when the Russians were advancing on Constantinople, and adopting a celebrated phrase of Gambetta with regard to MacMahon he said the Government must submit to the feeling of the country or resign. Mr. Forster assailed the Government with a bitterness not perhaps altogether dissociated from a sense of personal grievance. He made a stinging and contemptuous reference to the dialectical powers of the Prime Minister. The right hon. gentleman could, he said, persuade most people of most things and himself of anything. Nor was this all. He told the Radical party that the time would come when their consciences would support an expedition for the relief of Gordon. The Prime Minister apparently took this remark to be directed against him, and he cheered it in a spirit of irony. This irritated Mr. Forster and he retorted with the somewhat coarse sarcasm that he did not suppose that his late chief was one of those persons who had this dislike of war. The phrase itself was not much, but the tone in which it was delivered, the circumstances in which it was spoken, and, above all, the manner in which it was received by the Opposition, made it peculiarly offensive. Lord Hartington, who followed, did not deny that Mr. Forster was a friend of peace, but it was very remarkable that he should always be exhibiting himself as trumpet-call for war. The noble lord pointed out what the Government should have discovered before—that Gordon was an

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

extremely impulsive man. He might be a Christian hero, said Lord Hartington, but he was a man of quick and hasty temper. It was in this debate that Mr. Morley described Mr. Forster as a ferocious philanthropist. There was, he said, no more dangerous adviser than a Jingo in a drab coat or a fiery Crusader in a broad-brimmed hat. He protested against the efforts being made by philanthropists, bond-holders and sentimentalists to draw the Government into the conquest of the Soudan. He scoffed at the idea of four or five journalistic ventriloquists in London being taken as the voice of the people. Mr. Morley had only recently ceased to be one of the ventriloquists himself, and it may be assumed that he spoke from a proper estimate of their influence and authority in the world of politics. In the division on the votes of censure the Irish members voted with the Opposition, and it was defeated only by a majority of 28.

In the Committee on the Franchise Bill (May 20) an amendment had been proposed to exclude Ireland. It was on this question that Lord Randolph made his "mud cabin" speech. He had originally been opposed to the County Franchise Bill, but he had now completely swung round in its favour. His speech was full of the new wine of democratic Toryism. It was loudly cheered by the Irish members, but heard with mingled annoyance and dismay on his own side of the House. It was not so much that it was against the amendment as that it was pervaded by a contempt for Tory opinion and the Tory leaders. Some sympathy with the amendment had been expressed by Mr. W. H. Smith, and this brought down on that typical representative of the *bourgeoisie* the wrath and scorn of Lord Randolph. He pointed to the right hon. gentleman as openly as the courtesies of the debate would allow as one of the *nouveaux riches* who

260

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

inhabited a great suburban villa, and who regarded mud cabins as the climax of physical and mental degradation. In a style of mock humility he said that the difference between the mud cabin of the Irish labourer and the cottage of the English agricultural labourer was not so great as between the palace of the right hon. gentleman and the humble dwelling which sheltered himself from the storm and the tempest. If Mr. Smith had been disposed to utter any criticism on the latter half of this sentence the swiftest and most effective would have been "Fudge!" In all the luxuries, elegance and comforts of life there was no substantial difference between Lord Randolph's house in Connaught Place and Mr. Smith's in Grosvenor Place. More significant was the closing sentence of the noble lord's speech in which he said that the time had come for the conciliation and pacification of Ireland, and appealed to the Conservatives to emancipate themselves from the antiquated traditions of the party. To this appeal Mr. Chaplin and Lord Claud Hamilton responded by protesting against the views and policy of the noble lord. In this debate Sir P. O'Brien, a gentleman with a great faculty for rambling speech, discovered in a young Irish member, Mr. Kenny, the sea-serpent from the County Clare. The Speaker told him that he had no right to call an hon. member "a sea-serpent." "I withdraw the sea-serpent," promptly replied Sir Patrick. It was in the same speech that he heard "the twinkle in the eye of his hon. friend."

In Committee on the Franchise Bill Colonel Stanley proposed an amendment deferring its operation till the Redistribution Bill had been passed. In a speech on this amendment Lord Randolph Churchill explained his change of view on the Franchise question. He told the House that there were two parties in the Opposition on this subject. The one was in favour of a Bill

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

provided it included redistribution, and the other was undoubtedly opposed to reform. At first he agreed with the latter party, but he had changed his mind, and he told the House amidst much laughter that the instrument of his conversion was Mr. Arthur Balfour. It happened in this way. Lord Randolph had made a speech in Edinburgh against the extension of the suffrage, and then he had the delightful and pleasant experience that Mr. Balfour got up and in the presence of a large meeting pointedly and particularly disagreed with everything he said. At once he hastened to abandon an untenable position. Mr. Balfour disclaimed the honour of having been the instrument of his noble friend's conversion. All that he said at Edinburgh was that if the franchise was to be extended there was no class more fit to exercise it than the Scottish agricultural labourers. It may be of interest in present circumstances to mention that Mr. Woodall moved an amendment for the purpose of conferring the franchise on women. Mr. Gladstone firmly resisted it, and said that if it were carried the Government would no longer be responsible for the Bill. It was rejected by 271 to 135.

In another speech on the affairs of Egypt, on June 23, Lord Randolph displayed a singular want of judgment. He was speaking of the relations of England and France with regard to Egypt, and he asked if any one believed that the French Republic would be in existence three years hence. He charged the Prime Minister with excessive subserviency to France, and went so far as to say that he occupied the same position with regard to that country as Charles II did to Louis XIV.

On the third reading of the Franchise Bill Mr. Gladstone gave a grave and even menacing warning to the Upper House. In the case of quarrels and collisions

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

between the two Houses the proper course for the House of Commons to take was this—

“Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
Bear’t that the opposed may beware of thee.”

The spirit of the quotation was at once seized by the House, and a long and sustained chorus of cheers followed. In tones of solemnity he said that he would regard a quarrel between the two Houses as a great calamity to the Constitution under which they lived. He and his colleagues had studied moderation, and had run the risk of a quarrel with their own supporters, in order to avoid a quarrel with the other House. A conflict with the Lords he would regard as the most serious thing which had happened in his political life since the days of the repeal of the Corn Laws; and he would not attempt to put a limit to the mischief and difficulties that would arise from it. What the issue of it would be he had not a doubt.

Mr. Gladstone sat down amidst the enthusiastic cheers of his party, and the best evidence of the effect of his speech was to be found in the attitude of Sir S. Northcote. Usually the mildest and most peaceful of men, the leader of the Opposition was boiling over with indignation. His voice vibrated with passion, and he found it difficult at first to express his sentiments. He protested against the speech of the Prime Minister, and said that the question now was not the merits of the Bill, but whether the House of Lords was to form any part of the Constitution. Mr. Gladstone, he said, had raised an issue which the country would notice, and the deafening cheers of the Liberals must have assured Sir S. Northcote that he had correctly represented the situation. He hoped

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that the Prime Minister would acquire a little more wisdom, a little more discretion, and a little more respect for the principles of the Constitution. The House laughed at the little lecture which Mr. Gladstone received from his old private secretary. When the question that the Bill be read a third time was put a thundering shout of "Aye" rose from the Ministerial benches, and not a single "No" came from the Opposition. Members were trooping out when Mr. Gladstone signalled them to stop. He rose and called attention to the fact that the third reading had been carried *nemine contradicente*. The Speaker said that this was so, and that the fact would be recorded in the journals. Next day an effort was made to get the entry expunged. Mr. Pell and Mr. C. S. Read told the House that they had said "No" when the question was put. The Speaker said that he had heard no dissentient voice from any part of the House, and he added that there was nothing in the rules or precedents of the House to restrain its discretion in recording a fact of that kind in an event of so much importance. Sir S. Northcote said that the words *nemine contradicente* had never been added to the record of a Bill of a contentious character, and he moved that the entry should be expunged. Mr. Gladstone said that after Mr. Pell's statement he would support the motion, but his party declined to follow him. Neither they nor any one else had heard a single voice saying "No," and though Mr. Gladstone voted for the motion it was rejected by 125 to 82.

In the House of Lords the Franchise Bill was met by an amendment declining to proceed with the Bill unless it were accompanied by a scheme of redistribution, and the whole debate turned on that issue. Mr. Gladstone had hurled a quotation from Polonius at the House of

264

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Lords, and now Lord Carnarvon gave the Prime Minister a piece of advice from the same source—

“Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice ;
Take each man’s censure, but reserve thy judgment.”

The Earl of Rosebery made a brilliant speech in support of the Bill. He warned Lord Salisbury that if he led a storming party to the attack he might be left alone in the breach, as he was on a recent occasion. If the Lords rejected the Bill they would turn two millions of probable friends into two millions of bitter foes, and he appealed to the bishops as the preachers of the highest and purest theory of democracy ever proclaimed in the world to support the Bill. Lord Salisbury’s speech was very defiant in its tone. He poured scorn and contempt on the conduct of the Government in refusing to suspend the Bill pending the introduction of a redistribution scheme, and boldly challenged them to a dissolution. He treated with ridicule the meetings and processions which had been held in support of the Bill. There was not the faintest tinge of democratic Toryism in the language of the Conservative leader. On a division the amendment was carried by 205 to 146, and so the Bill was not killed but set aside. The conduct of the Lords led to immediate and vigorous action on the part of the Government. At a meeting of the party Mr. Gladstone announced that Parliament would be prorogued almost immediately; that all the Bills not passed would be abandoned, and that Parliament would meet in the autumn for the purpose of passing the Franchise Bill again. In the House of Commons in the afternoon the whole legislative work of the session was destroyed at one fell swoop. Sir S. Northcote mildly criticised the course taken by the Government. Lord R. Churchill

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

made up for the meekness of his leader by a speech distinguished even among his parliamentary efforts by the coarse and reckless violence of its language.

The abandonment of all the Bills, he said, proved that the Government had been a gigantic humbug, a stupendous imposture and persistent fraud. The object of the Government was to prepare for a revolutionary agitation against the Lords. He quoted the fable of the donkey in the lion's skin, and seemed to suggest that either Mr. Chamberlain or Sir Charles Dilke was the donkey. The Liberals, however, turned the fable against the noble lord, and by the laughter and cheers with which they greeted his version of the fable said, as plainly as they could, that if there was any donkey in a lion's skin it was the noble lord himself. He assured Mr. Gladstone that nothing was more easy to detect than the difference between the demagogue's bray and the people's voice. Mr. Morley rebuked Lord Randolph for the style of his speech, and told him that if he could find nothing more humorous and witty to say than that an opponent was a donkey he was in great straits indeed.

It appeared that before the division in the Lords an effort had been made to come to an agreement with regard to the Bill. The Government had offered to Lord Cairns to consent to an address to the Crown pledging them to bring in a Redistribution Bill next year. The proposal was not accepted, and Mr. Gladstone had referred to it at the meeting of his party. The Opposition alleged that this was a breach of confidence, but Mr. Gladstone denied that the communications with Lord Cairns possessed a confidential character. Lord R. Churchill moved the adjournment of the House, and made a speech of an exceedingly abusive character. He charged Mr. Gladstone with disclosing a communication of a secret and confidential character for the purpose

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of obtaining a party advantage. What had taken place had destroyed all confidence in the honour of the Government. Mr. Gladstone could bear with equanimity the most violent attacks on the policy and acts of the Government, but an imputation on his personal honour he deeply resented. Under a feeling of irritation he spoke of the "foul language" of the noble lord—for the first time so far as I know using an expression which he had to withdraw. He was charged with conduct that was false and disgraceful, but he repeated that nothing that had passed between him and the Peers was regarded as private. Before the debate was over Lord R. Churchill had recovered his manners and his good humour, and he withdrew in the most unreserved manner his charge against the Prime Minister, and even expressed his personal regard for the right hon. gentleman. Mr. Gladstone bowed graciously in acknowledgment of this compliment, and Lord R. Churchill went on to say that he would be happy to co-operate in any arrangement for avoiding a conflict between the two Houses. Mr. Gladstone welcomed this declaration, and said that the Government were still in the same mind as when the offer was made to Lord Cairns. At a meeting of Tory peers on July 15 it was decided that the Lords should adhere to their position, and a day or two after Lord Salisbury in a strong and determined speech declared for open war. He denounced the doctrine that the House of Lords was to be influenced by intimidation or agitation, and said that if it were once accepted the Birmingham Caucus would be divided into two branches: one for the manipulation of the House of Commons, and the other for the intimidation of the House of Lords. He concluded a firm and unfaltering speech by appealing to the House of Lords to do its duty regardless of all dangers, real and imaginary. Lord Granville's easy

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and placid temper was disturbed by the warlike and combative speech of the leader of the Opposition. He did not believe that the noble Marquis was in earnest in his desire for the extension of the suffrage. This remark produced a little storm in the atmosphere of the Upper House, and there were loud cries of "Withdraw." But instead of withdrawing Lord Granville proceeded to vindicate his distrust of Lord Salisbury.

The recess was given over to demonstrations and meetings, and when Parliament met Sir George Trevelyan had left the Irish Office for the Duchy of Lancaster, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, then only Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, had become Chief Secretary. The Franchise Bill was reintroduced, and Mr. Gladstone warned the Lords that if it were again rejected larger issues would arise. ("Why not?" said several of the Tories.) With a gesture of surprise the Prime Minister asked gentlemen opposite if they desired to raise the question of a radical change in the Constitution. In the course of the debate Mr. Chamberlain described Sir H. Wolff as playing the part of jackal to Lord R. Churchill. A question of order was raised, and the Speaker said that the word was no doubt used in a figurative sense. Sir S. Northcote objected to its use even as a figure, but Mr. Chamberlain explained that he used the word in the same figurative sense as the leader of the Opposition had recently described Lord R. Churchill as a "bonnet." The retort was perfect and greatly delighted the House. The Franchise Bill was introduced on November 16, and it speedily appeared that the Opposition would come to terms. Mr. Gladstone offered to communicate to the leaders of the Tory party the provisions of the Redistribution Bill, to bring it in, and take the second reading while the Franchise Bill was going through Committee, and to make the passing

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the Redistribution Bill vital to the existence of the Government. This proposal was accepted by Lord Salisbury. No further difficulty arose, and the Franchise Bill received the Royal Assent on December 6—the adjustment of the details of the Redistribution Bill being left over till next year.

CHAPTER XXII

1885

THE news of the capture of Khartoum reached this country on February 5, and some days later of the death of Gordon. These events profoundly affected the public mind, and had a marked influence on the events of the session. They weakened the position of the Government, and had indirectly not a little to do with its overthrow. As soon as Parliament met Sir S. Northcote gave notice of a vote of censure on the Government. Mr. Gladstone's reference to General Gordon in the House after the news of his death had been received was regarded as somewhat cold; but if this were so, he made ample atonement in his speech on the vote of censure. His life, said the Prime Minister, was devoted to his sovereign, to his country and to the world. His sympathies were not limited by race, country or religion. He was a hero among heroes. He had no idea of wealth or power or fame, but to do good was the one object of his life. In regard to the future Mr. Gladstone was rather vague, but evidently averse to the policy of extending British responsibility over the Soudan. It meant, he said, government over aliens and of Christians over Mahommedans. It was manifest that he regarded a permanent or prolonged occupation of the Soudan as out of the question, but he came under no definite obligation. In the course of the debate Mr. Gibson said the Government were going to Khartoum to please the Whigs, and to run away to please the Radicals.

270

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Mr. Chaplin's speech was marked by peculiar violence and bitterness. The craven conduct, the imbecile purpose and the treachery of the Government towards General Gordon would meet its reward in the deep and bitter expression of an outraged and injured people. Nothing, he said, would satisfy the country but the removal of the Prime Minister from office. Sir W. Harcourt complained of the unreasoning violence of Mr. Chaplin's language. He repudiated the idea of annexing or occupying the Soudan, and the ground on which he justified the expedition to Khartoum was that it was the only way in which the evacuation of the Soudan could be accomplished. Sir Robert Peel made a racy speech, and rather aptly quoted Canning's lines—

“ In planning expeditions 'gainst the foe
Our ministers are ever sure and slow ;
Each expedition shares the common fate,
Slow to depart and sure to be too late.”

The whole force of the attack was directed against Mr. Gladstone. He was responsible, said Sir E. Clarke, for everything that occurred, and Mr. W. E. Forster assailed his old chief in the most sledge-hammer style. He never forgot or forgave the way in which he was treated in 1882, and on this occasion he attacked the Government, and especially its head, with a relish which was evident to all who heard him. In the division the Government were only saved from defeat by a majority of 14. The smallness of the majority was due in part to the abstention of some of their supporters, and in part to the fact that the Irish members voted with the Opposition.

It was in this debate that Mr. W. O'Brien obtained the distinction of suspension. The Speaker expressed the view that it was the evident sense of the House that the question had been fully discussed. Mr. O'Brien

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

protested, shouting: "We'll remember this in Ireland," and he was at once named and then suspended. The hon. gentleman said this was the only honour he ever ambitioned, and on being ordered to withdraw from the House, he replied: "Certainly, with more pleasure than I ever entered it." Mr. O'Brien has probably had more entrances and exits than any other member of the House. He seems to be no sooner out than he desires to come back.

The small majority on the vote of censure shook the position of the ministry, and there were rumours that they would resign. They decided, however, to hold on. The bitterness of feeling may be judged by the fact that when Lord Hartington a day or two after mentioned that Mr. Gladstone was kept away by indisposition, Mr. Wharton, a Tory member, uttered a "Hear, hear!" A cheer from Mr. Biggar would have surprised no one, but that it should have been given by a Conservative, even of the type and capacity of Mr. Wharton, was an evidence not only of the decay of parliamentary manners but of the feeling which the fate of General Gordon had aroused. At a later sitting Mr. Wharton repudiated the interpretation that had been put upon his cheer, but he did not state for whom or for what it had been given.

The chief legislative work of the session was the passing of the Redistribution Bill, which had been brought in before the adjournment, and was now prosecuted through its different stages. The main provisions of the Bill had been settled between the leaders of both parties, and no serious questions arose during its progress. The time of the House was much occupied with questions affecting Afghanistan and Egypt, and it was on these that parliamentary and public attention was centred. A great sensation was created when Mr. Childers appeared at the bar with a message from the Crown

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

intimating that a case of emergency had arisen, and that Her Majesty had determined to call out the Army Reserves and the Militia. The interest in the position was much increased when a day or two later Mr. Childers announced that the Government would ask for a vote of credit. Then came the news of the incident at Penjdeh—a collision between the Russian and Afghan troops—near the frontier, which an Anglo-Russian Commission were at that moment engaged in delimiting. On April 22 Mr. Gladstone told the House that the Government would propose a vote of credit of eleven millions. This was taken as a plain intimation that the differences with Russia were grave, and that they might end in war. In proposing the vote of credit on the 27th Mr. Gladstone won one of his greatest oratorical triumphs. Never had he made a more impressive speech or proved more clearly his persuasive power and mastery of the House of Commons. He did not conceal his view that the situation was serious, and he stated his case with equal dignity and firmness. He based his appeal for the support of the House on the foundation of justice and right; and he discussed the policy of the Russian Government with quiet and passionless calm. He would not say that war was before us or even that it was proximate; but if the difficulty were to end in violence and rupture the Government would be able to show that they had done all that they could to prevent two nations entering into war and bloodshed.

The closing sentences of the speech were delivered amidst a silence that could almost be felt. “We must do our best to have right done in the matter. Under these circumstances this is a case for preparation, and I hope the House will not press on us a demand for time, which can have no other effect than propagating here and elsewhere the belief that there is some indecision

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

in the mind of Parliament ; whereas I believe that with one heart, one soul and one purpose they will go forward to meet the demands of justice and the calls of honour, and will, only subject to justice and honour, labour for the purposes of peace." Mr. Gladstone sat down amidst cheers from all parts of the House, and the effect of the speech was probably unexampled in parliamentary annals. He had convinced every one of the necessity of the vote. The leader of the Opposition had evidently intended to speak, but he did not rise. No one else got up to address the House. Cries of " Agreed " rose from both sides, and to the astonishment of the oldest members the vote was agreed to without a word of discussion. Such an event was, in more recent times at least, without precedent. Mr. Gladstone had convinced the House and disarmed the Opposition, which a few days before had been clamouring for his overthrow. One member, however, would have spoken against the vote if he had not lost his opportunity. Mr. Labouchere, unable to do without a cigarette during the whole of Mr. Gladstone's speech, left his place ; and when, after enjoying his whiff, he returned he found that the vote had been carried. " I am d——d if I would have let them have it," he is reported to have said.

In a few days the Government were able to announce that the differences with Russia had been referred to arbitration, and this intimation at once destroyed the unanimity with which the vote of credit had been passed. On the report of the vote Lord Randolph Churchill made a speech more worthy of a reckless pamphleteer than a statesman. It was studded with sentences which drew the cheers of a disappointed Opposition. He denounced the arrangement made with Russia as a base and cowardly surrender, and entering into the dangerous region of prophecy predicted that it

274

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

would result in the loss of India. The advance of Russia in Central Asia had been marked by falsehood, fraud and treachery, and this language was spoken by the man who within two months was to be Secretary of State for India.

The speech had one interesting passage, but it was not Lord Randolph's own. Nothing is more common nor momentarily more effective in the House of Commons than to confront a statesman with some of his previous deliverances. In a speech at Glasgow in 1880 Mr. Gladstone had stated the whole case against the Beaconsfield Government in a passage of concentrated force and eloquence; and Lord R. Churchill now read it out to the House amidst the frequent cheers of the Tory party. The passage is somewhat long, but it is worth giving. "We have," said Mr. Gladstone, "finances in confusion; we have legislation in intolerable arrears; we have public distress aggravated by the destruction of confidence. We have Russia aggrandised and yet estranged. We have Turkey befriended, as we say, but mutilated and sinking. We have Europe restless and disturbed, agitated from end to end with rumours and alarms. We have the invasion of a free people in the Transvaal; and we have, I fear, in one quarter or another prospects of further disturbance and shedding of blood. We have Afghanistan ruined. We have India not advanced but thrown back in government, subject to heavy and unjust charges; and with all this we have had at home the law broken and the right of Parliament invaded. Is this the way, or is this not the way, in which a free people ought to be governed? I have spared no effort to mark the points at which the roads divide—the one path which plunges into suffering, discredit and dishonour, and the other which slowly, perhaps, but surely leads a free and high-minded people towards the blessings of progress and justice, of liberty

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and peace." This passage, said Lord Randolph, was prophecy exceeding in miraculousness anything that could be found in Holy Writ. It exactly described the political position at the present moment; and so thought the whole Tory party.

Mr. Gladstone warned the House against any appearance of hesitation in sanctioning the vote. He regarded the denunciation of the ministry as a matter of course, and mentioned that more indictments had been preferred against this Government than in any of the eleven Parliaments in which he had sat. He did not object to lengthening the catalogue of the indictments, but let it be done on a proper occasion and with proper knowledge. The report of the vote was carried by a large majority. Next day Mr. Gladstone informed the House that Sir Peter Lumsden and Colonel Stewart, who had been engaged in delimiting the frontier, had been recalled in consequence of the transfer of negotiations to London. This intimation, though it might have been expected, created much surprise, and it was followed by an avalanche of questions. The Prime Minister explained that Sir P. Lumsden and his colleague could be of no use on the frontier, though they might be of service in London. They had not been recalled in disgrace, but, said the right hon. gentleman in an eminently Gladstonian phrase, had "been ordered to repair to the capital of the empire."

Some days later Mr. Gladstone was able to tell the House that a frontier had been arranged in Central Asia which was satisfactory to the Indian and Russian Governments. On the same day Lord Hartington, now Secretary for War, informed Parliament that all idea of conquering or holding the Soudan had been given up, and that it had been decided to take early and complete measures for its evacuation. The second reading of

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

one of the Consolidated Fund Bills of the year happened to be the first order of the day, and in this Lord G. Hamilton made a speech in which he endeavoured, and not without success, to out-Churchill Churchill. He charged the Government with every sort of public and political crime. They had been merciless to the weak and cowardly to the strong. No matter what supplies Parliament gave them they would mismanage the affairs of the empire. He gave his charges a more offensive character by accusing Mr. Gladstone of abandoning colleagues like Mr. Forster and public servants like General Gordon. The Prime Minister did not speak himself on this occasion; he put up Mr. Chamberlain to reply, which he did, not by rhetorical denials, but by a close and convincing examination of the facts.

It was well known that at this time the Cabinet were in difficulties over the renewal of the Irish Coercion Act. Some members were in favour of allowing it to lapse altogether, and others in favour of continuing it. It was ultimately agreed, so it was reported, to renew some of its provisions and abandon others. Several of their supporters were against the policy of continuing the Act in any form, and Mr. Morley had given notice that he would meet the motion for leave to bring in the Bill by a hostile amendment. In these circumstances some attention was attracted by a sentence in a speech by Mr. Gladstone on May 11. He was rebuking the members of the Opposition for their interruptions, and deprecating the new manners that were being introduced into Parliament, and he used these words: "I do not object to them on my own account, because they matter little to a person whose future intervention in political conflicts is much more likely to be measured by weeks than by months, and certainly by months than years." At this moment Mr. Gladstone had probably

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

some thought of resigning and retiring from political life; but he had yet nine more years of active parliamentary existence before him. He was, however, out of office, though not out of public life, sooner perhaps than he expected.

The Budget had been brought in in April, and to meet a considerable deficit Mr. Childers proposed to raise the income-tax from 6*d.* to 8*d.*, and to increase the spirit duty by 2*s.* per gallon and the beer duty by 1*s.* per barrel. The Tories had been engaged in working up an agitation against the financial proposals of the Government. Notice had been given of a Bill for the continuation of certain provisions of the Crimes Act, and this led to a combination between the Conservative Opposition and the Irish party. The second reading of the Budget Bill came on June 8, and Sir M. H. Beach proposed an amendment condemning the increase in the spirit and beer duties and certain other portions of the Budget. The debate possessed no feature of special interest, but one good thing, said by Sir Charles Dilke, may be recorded. Sir M. H. Beach had denounced the subserviency of the Government to Radicals and teetotallers, and Sir Charles Dilke replied that he preferred Radical teetotallers to pot-house politicians.

The division took place at half-past one in the morning in the midst of the keenest excitement. In the early part of the evening no one had anticipated a Government defeat, but towards midnight it became known that ministers were in a tight place. The tellers for the Government came in first, and this was regarded as a hopeful sign by the Opposition. Lord R. Churchill smacked his knees with the delight of coming victory. In a minute more the Opposition tellers appeared, and when the Clerk handed the paper with the figures to Mr. Rowland Winn, the Chief Opposition Whip, both

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the Tory and the Irish parties went delirious with joy. They jumped on the seats and waved their hats or handkerchiefs. I have a vision yet of Lord R. Churchill standing on the corner seat below the gangway and flourishing his white notice paper with exultant delight. All this time the tellers stood at the table unable to announce the numbers. The Irish members were even more wildly demonstrative than the Conservatives. Again and again the followers of Mr. Parnell rose to their feet and hurled "Coercion!" "Buckshot!" and other epithets at the defeated ministry. At last Mr. Winn was able to announce the figures, and it was found that the Government were beaten by a majority of 12: 264 to 252. The Irish members seemed to labour under the idea that it was Mr. Forster and not the ministry who had met with disaster, for they continued to shout "Buckshot!" some time after the figures had been given. Whether the defeat was arranged, as was suggested and widely believed at the time, perhaps only Lord Stalbridge could tell us. As Lord Richard Grosvenor he was at the time the Chief Government Whip; but in any event the summons issued to the supporters of the Government in view of the division was not very urgent in its terms, and it gave no hint of danger. Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues resigned, and it was remarkable that on leaving the House after announcing that he had ceased to be a minister of the Crown he was received by the people outside with much cheering. Lord R. Churchill, on the other hand, was hissed and hooted, and the attitude of the crowd became so threatening that he had to seek the protection of the police.

Whilst the negotiations for the formation of the new Government were going on, a rather interesting quarrel arose among the Tory leaders over some clauses introduced into the Redistribution Bill. These clauses had

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

reference to registration, and they had been proposed by Lord Salisbury and accepted by the Government. When the Bill returned to the Commons Lord R. Churchill assumed an attitude more Radical than the Radicals. He declared that to allow such a precedent to be established would be a dangerous innovation. The new clauses imposed a pecuniary burden on the people, and they should not be proceeded with in the absence of responsible ministers of the Crown. Mr. Gladstone expressed a certain degree of sympathy with Lord Randolph's views; but the circumstances were peculiar, and it was desirable that the Seats Bill should be passed as soon as possible. Much to the surprise of every one Sir M. H. Beach threw over Sir Stafford Northcote, who had been a party to the arrangement, and supported the views of Lord R. Churchill. Sir W. Harcourt made merry over the divided councils of the Opposition, and Sir S. Northcote looked annoyed and pained by the action of his colleagues. So jealous were the Tory party of the action of the Peers that Mr. Raikes said that he was shocked at the idea of taking registration clauses from the Upper House. The new clauses, he said, involved the right of the House of Commons to determine all questions affecting the election of its own members. The Lords' amendments were in the end accepted, but this Conservative suspicion of the House of Lords was in view of recent events rather remarkable. After considerable difficulty the new ministry was formed. Sir S. Northcote was deprived of the leadership of the Commons, and sent to the House of Lords as the Earl of Iddesleigh, and Sir M. H. Beach became Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House. Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, while Lord Iddesleigh received the office of

280

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

First Lord of the Treasury, which for the first time for generations was dissociated from the premiership. Lord R. Churchill became Secretary for India. Sir Hardinge Giffard received the Lord Chancellorship with the title of Lord Halsbury. Sir Richard Cross went to the Home Office, and Mr. W. H. Smith took the office of Secretary for War, and so Lord Randolph failed to keep out of the Government the two men whom he had contemptuously described as Marshal & Snelgrove. Mr. Balfour was President of the Local Government Board. The treatment of Sir S. Northcote roused a great deal of indignation among the older Conservatives, and they feared—it turned out wrongly—that the new Prime Minister was too much under the influence of Lord R. Churchill. Sir W. Lawson said that the death of the late Government might be explained in the language of the verdict of a Dorset jury: “Died by the visitation of God under suspicious circumstances.”

In the House of Lords the Duke of Argyll raised a debate on the circumstances which led to the fall of the Government, and made a speech which recalls the predictions and maledictions of Lord Rosebery in 1909. The proof of the existence of divisions in the late Cabinet was to be found, he said, not in the statements in the newspapers but in the radiant and joyful countenances of the ministers, who whenever you met them said: “Thank God, we are out of the mess and have got the Tories into it.” He complained that Mr. Chamberlain should be allowed to go about and preach doctrines opposed to the most sacred convictions of the leader of the Liberal party. Mr. Chamberlain’s doctrine of “Ransom” was inconsistent with an old document called the Decalogue. The whole speech was a vigorous onslaught on the newer Liberalism, which, by the way, was milder in its character

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

than the still newer Liberalism of to-day. Lord Rosebery, who had recently said that Mr. Gladstone's umbrella was good enough for him, came in for a share of the duke's polemics. The noble earl replied to the duke in a speech worthy of his future reputation, which, moreover, possesses this remarkable character—that it might now be delivered as an answer to his own speeches in 1909. He described the duke as a Cassandra warning the Liberal party against itself, and appealing to himself as the one infallible exponent of true Liberalism. He met the duke's fears and prophecies with ridicule rather than argument, and as to Mr. Chamberlain's doctrine of "Ransom" it appeared to him only another version of the old doctrine that property had its duties as well as its rights. This explanation of Mr. Chamberlain's famous phrase made the Peers laugh, and Lord Rosebery told them with some tartness that it was the first time that the doctrine had ever been laughed at. Wherever the ark of Liberalism might be found it would not now, he said, be found at Inverary, and I am afraid we may now add that it will not be found at Dalmeny. If Lord Rosebery reads this speech he must be amused to think how completely he now fills the part of Cassandra, which he then assigned to the Duke of Argyll. Though the earlier speeches of statesmen are often answers to their later ones, it is not often that that operation has been so completely performed as it was by Lord Rosebery in the present instance.

The Tories now paid the price which they had to give the Irish party for their assistance in turning out the Government. They had, of course, agreed not to renew the Coercion Act, and they had led the Irish party to believe that in some way or other they would reopen the case of the Maamtrasna murders—a peculiarly horrible

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

crime in which a whole family had been butchered. When the question was raised in the House the Government would not agree to a formal inquiry, but they promised to consider any representations that would be made to them in regard to the Maamtrasna convictions. Sir W. Harcourt complained that the leader of the House had abandoned the judges and juries of Ireland. He showed that there was no case for inquiry, and indeed the investigations made by the Government led to no result. The speech of Lord Randolph Churchill seemed to point to a new era of policy. It was only, he said, by divesting themselves of all responsibility for the acts of the late Government and taking responsibility upon themselves that they could hope to discharge the task before them. The present Government would fail to govern Ireland if they went out of their way to assume one jot or tittle of the responsibility of their predecessors. This was the clean slate with a vengeance, but before seven months were over the new ministry announced that they were going to ask Parliament to write Coercion large once again on their own slate.

Mr. Bright made a strong speech outside the House on July 24, in which he attacked the Irish members as the rebel party. Immediately after attention was directed in the House to the language of the hon. gentleman, but he vigorously defended and justified it. Mr. Justin McCarthy repudiated the suggestion that he was identified with a rebel party, and Lord R. Churchill of all men appeared as the advocate of moderation of language. He had shown himself to be the greatest adept in unmeasured vituperation in this Parliament and yet he now ventured to censure Mr. Bright's violence of language. He quoted some of the strong phrases which Mr. Chamberlain had used about the

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

British Government in Ireland, and asked what he would think if he were charged with being a rebel and disloyal to the Crown. Mr. Chamberlain at once replied to the noble lord's question, and said that if the charge were made he would take no notice of it. He congratulated the Tory leaders on the fidelity with which they were carrying out the terms of their alliance with the Irish party.

CHAPTER XXIII

1886

THE General Election took place in November 1885. Every one knew that somewhere between eighty and eighty-five Nationalist members would be returned from Ireland, and in view of this event Mr. Gladstone, in his address to the electors of Midlothian, gave the country a distinct warning of what his policy would be. He said : " To maintain the supremacy of the Crown and the unity of the empire with all the authority of Parliament necessary for the preservation of that unity is the first duty of the representatives of the people. Subject to this governing principle, every grant to a portion of the country of enlarged powers for the management of their own affairs is not in my view a source of danger but a means of averting it, and is in the nature of new guarantees for increased cohesion, happiness and strength." Read in the light of after events this passage is striking, but its significance did not seem to impress the public mind at the time. It did not affect the position or the views of the Liberals, who in an enormous majority were returned more or less hostile to Home Rule.

The result of the General Election was practically a tie between the Liberals on one side and the combined Tories and Nationalists on the other. The latter had a nominal majority of four, and among the former were two or three men like Sir E. Watkin and Mr. Fitzwilliam, who were Liberals of a very nominal type. Neither the Coalition nor the Liberals were able alone

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

to carry on the Government of the country. Sir W. Harcourt suggested that the Tories should be allowed to stew for some time in their Parnellite juice, but this idea did not meet with much favour in the Liberal ranks. The alliance between the Government and their Irish allies was of a most fragile character, and it would obviously not stand the strain of those measures for the preservation of law and order which the Conservatives would demand. If the Tory leaders had adopted Lord Carnarvon's policy they might have held office by Parnellite support and Liberal aid. As every one knows, Mr. Gladstone had offered to co-operate with Lord Salisbury in settling the Irish question, but to this suggestion the head of the Government made no response. Long before Parliament met the Tory and Parnellite alliance was in process of dissolution. It became known that Mr. Gladstone would be willing to consider the demands of the Nationalists, and this of course altered the situation, for with the support of Mr. Parnell and his friends the Liberals would have an overwhelming majority.

The story of the Hawarden Kite, as it was called, has never been fully told. Lord Morley apparently did not know all the facts of the case when he referred to it in his *Life of Gladstone*. The late Sir Wemyss Reid, long the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, and myself were the only two persons who were fully aware of the circumstance which led to the publication, on December 17, of the statement that Mr. Gladstone was prepared to approach the settlement of the Irish question on the principle of setting up a local legislative body. No one who had followed Mr. Gladstone's recent references to the question should have been much surprised. Still, the statements that were published about the middle of December as to Mr. Gladstone's views pro-

286

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

duced no little stir in the political world, and several Conservative journals asserted that he was ready to betray the cause of the Union. The incident occurred nearly a generation ago, and there can be no harm now in giving the whole facts of the case. They show that to a considerable extent the flying of the Hawarden Kite was a matter of chance rather than design.

I then wrote for the *Leeds Mercury* as well as the *Dundee Advertiser*, and the editor of the *Leeds Mercury* was in frequent communication with Mr. Herbert Gladstone. After the General Election of 1885 there was much interest and speculation as to what Mr. Gladstone would do. The Parnellites had made common cause with the Conservatives at the election, and the parties returned from the country almost equally balanced. There were 333 Liberals and 337 Tories and Parnellites. The Coalition could not carry on the Government without some Liberal support; while if the Liberals took office they would be hourly at the mercy of the Coalition. Soon after the election was over the political world was disturbed, though it ought not to have been, by the rumour that Mr. Gladstone was prepared at least to consider the Irish demand. In the second week of December Sir Wemyss Reid came to London, and I saw him at the *Mercury* office. He told me that he had received a long letter from Mr. Herbert Gladstone on the subject of Home Rule, and proceeded to read it. Mr. Herbert Gladstone began by saying that he wrote with the knowledge of his father, and this of course imparted considerable weight and authority to his statements. In this letter he gave a rough outline of the method in which he thought the Irish question ought to be treated. The concession of some form of self-government he regarded as essential, and then he proceeded to sketch the general outlines of a

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Home Rule scheme in all its main features, substantially the same as those embodied in Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule measures. The letter was marked "Private," and Sir Wemyss Reid decided that no reference could be made to it in the *Mercury*—though I understood that Mr. Herbert Gladstone did not object to the information which it contained being used "with discretion." Nothing, however, was written on the subject at that time in the columns of the *Mercury* or elsewhere.

A few days after, walking up Fleet Street in the evening, I met the then editor of the National Press Agency, which is in close touch with the Liberal headquarters; and he told me that Mr. Herbert Gladstone had been at their office that afternoon, and had informed them that his father was prepared to approach the settlement of the Irish question on a Home Rule basis. The editor of the National Press Agency then gave me an outline of Mr. Herbert Gladstone's views, in all respects similar to that contained in the letter to Sir Wemyss Reid. I remember that he added, curiously enough, that his father had some expectation of carrying Lord Hartington with him, but very little hope of Sir William Harcourt. I then asked if the National Press Agency were publishing all this information next day, and he told me that they were; and as a matter of fact it appeared in the daily letter which they sent to certain provincial papers. It seemed to me that now all reason for secrecy with regard to Mr. Herbert Gladstone's letter had disappeared. Sir Wemyss Reid fortunately was still in town. I saw him as soon as possible, and after discussing the matter I wrote—and he authorised the publication of—the statement on the subject which appeared next day in the *Leeds Mercury*. The explanation of Mr. Gladstone's views given by the National Press Agency was in no respect materially different.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Now a few words as to the appearance of the statement in the *Standard*. This journal and the *Leeds Mercury* were then on intimate business relations. The *Mercury* obtained all the valuable foreign telegrams of the *Standard*, while the *Standard* was given whatever political information of interest was received at the *Mercury* London office. I may state that arrangements of this kind have no reference to politics, and that they frequently exist between journals representing opposite parties. I ought also to state that Mr. Mudford, then the managing editor of the *Standard*, and Sir Wemyss Reid were old colleagues and great personal friends. This, of course, gave the connection of the two papers something more than a merely business character. After I had written the statement which appeared in the *Mercury*, Sir Wemyss Reid decided to give the editor of the *Standard* at least an indication of the direction in which events were moving. He asked me to accompany him. Mr. Mudford was not in his office, and we saw the late Mr. Byron Curtis, the assistant editor. Sir Wemyss Reid told him in a general way how matters stood, and that Mr. Gladstone believed that the Irish question could only be settled on Home Rule lines. He did not authorise the positive announcement which appeared in the *Standard* next morning—indeed, he was profoundly annoyed at it. That statement was written with an air of great authority and knowledge, and it contained so much truth that an absolute contradiction was impossible. It was the statement in the *Standard* that alarmed many of the Whigs and some of the Radicals. It produced a great flutter in the political world, and a day or two after it appeared there was a Whig conclave at Devonshire House. It was out of this conclave that the Liberal Unionist party sprang. This is the whole story of the Hawarden Kite.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Apparently Lord Morley thinks that the statements which appeared on December 17 went further than the facts justified. No doubt the main object of Mr. Herbert Gladstone was to prevent politicians and journalists from committing themselves definitely against the settlement of the Irish question on the basis of national self-government, but it was impossible to do this without suggesting that the Liberal leader was willing to attempt to deal with it on what is called Home Rule lines. If the Liberals were to be warned against taking up a position hostile to Home Rule, the necessary implication was that the man who had often led them to victory was in favour of it. This was all that the Hawarden Kite amounted to, and the statements that were made regarding the establishment of an Irish Parliament, its powers and limitations, were simply deductions from the views which Mr. Gladstone himself had expressed in his election address. Though in his talk with the editor of the National Press Agency Mr. Herbert Gladstone had filled in the outlines, he did nothing more than indicate the provisions that were inevitable in any scheme of Home Rule. The statements published on December 17 certainly went further than Mr. Gladstone desired. Lord Morley believes that the very words "Irish Parliament" alarmed the public. This at least is doubtful. No settlement of Home Rule was possible which did not involve the creation of an Irish legislature, or Parliament, or what you like. I should say myself that if there had been any possibility of carrying Home Rule in the Parliament of 1886 its chances were increased by the announcement that was made regarding Mr. Gladstone's views. It helped to familiarise the public with the idea of Home Rule: it compelled the Liberal party in Parliament to face and consider this

290

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

method of dealing with the Irish question. Of the Liberal members in that House of Commons a great majority had been returned more or less hostile to Home Rule, many of them pledged against it, and it was too much to assume that suddenly in the month of April when Mr. Gladstone should present his scheme they would all at once change their opinions. I doubt whether it was ever possible to secure Home Rule by a sort of *coup de main* in the Parliament of 1886; but the only hope of doing so was by letting the country and the constituencies know as early as possible that Mr. Gladstone was ready to undertake the settlement of the Irish question by establishing a local legislature for purely Irish affairs.

The Parliament of 1886 had a short, but in many respects a remarkable, history. Within a period of less than five months it destroyed two Governments, and when another appeal was made to the country the electors restored to power the Government which had been dismissed in January. After the Queen's Speech was delivered Lord Salisbury in the Lords demanded a definite assurance regarding the policy of Mr. Gladstone, and referring to the statements which had appeared in December declared that the Liberal leader had no right to skulk behind ambiguous denials. Mr. Gladstone in the debate on the Address made an eloquent appeal to the Conservatives not to make the Irish question a party question, and asked all parties to approach it with a desire to do justice to the gigantic interests involved. "In Heaven's name," he cried, "maintain the Union; but something more is required." Their duty was to accord to the Irish members a patient and candid hearing. He asked for the plans of the Government, and until he heard them he would reserve his own

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

freedom of action. He would keep his own counsel until there might be a prospect of benefit from a forward movement, and in the meantime, as an old parliamentary hand, he advised his followers to do the same. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, followed, and called on Mr. Gladstone to give a frank and outspoken declaration in favour of maintaining the Union similar to that made by Lord Hartington. The verdict of the nation as between the two parties was, he said, uncertain, and the Government were compelled to remain in office not merely by a feeling of duty but by constitutional usage, in the face of a crisis of great difficulty for the empire. He invited the House if it disliked the policy of the Government to say so as soon as possible; but at that moment its policy had not become apparent. Mr. Parnell spoke next, and said that the concession of autonomy to Ireland would largely diminish the chances of separation. When the representatives of the landlords talked about the integrity of the empire, said the Irish leader, they were thinking of the integrity of their breeches pocket. If the Land question were settled they would hear nothing more from Conservative members about the integrity of the empire and the risk of separation. "I was born a Protestant," said Mr. Parnell, "I have lived a Protestant and I hope to die a Protestant, and if in the future after the concession of the Irish claims any danger were to arise to my fellow-countrymen"—he evidently meant fellow-religionists—"I should stand up for liberty of speech, liberty of conscience, and liberty to live and thrive to every section of the community." In this debate Mr. Sexton made a brilliant speech, and told Lord R. Churchill, who had challenged Mr. Gladstone to move an amendment on the Address, that he was too young to give the leader of the Opposition lessons

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

in parliamentary strategy. If the Government decided on a policy of coercion the Irish party, said Mr. Sexton, would use all the resources of parliamentary science in resisting it—a euphemism for obstruction which the House quite well understood. Colonel Waring, one of the Ulster Tories—the Captain Craig of the time—gave a lurid picture of what the Protestants would suffer under Home Rule. He would not object to separation if they were to be allowed to fight it out; but the loyal minority would be tied down by the English law to the rock of Prometheus, while the twin vultures of bigotry and atheism would gnaw at their vitals.

The first two days of the debate on the Address made it certain that the doom of the Government was sealed; but no one could say when or in what way the fatal blow would be delivered. Ministers themselves soon brought matters to a crisis. On January 26 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on behalf of Mr. W. H. Smith, who had succeeded Sir W. Hart Dyke as Chief Secretary, gave notice that he would move for leave to bring in a Bill for the suppression of the National League and the protection of life and property. This at once cleared up the situation. Both sections of the Opposition decided on prompt action. It happened that, on the day on which the notice was given, Mr. Jesse Collings had an amendment on the Address, expressing regret that the Government had not announced any measure for enabling agricultural labourers to obtain allotments and small holdings, and on this it was decided to give the Government the *coup de grâce*. The debate on this amendment now possesses little interest. Mr. Chaplin opposed it on behalf of the Government, and denounced the predatory instincts of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Collings, with whom in a few months he was to be in cordial alliance. Mr. Gladstone's speech contained

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

one interesting passage. If it were Socialism, he said, to wish to reunite the people to the soil, then Socialism was of very old date. In the reign of George III the Parliament of that day recognised that the condition of the agricultural labourers was worthy of solicitude, and gave power to the local authorities not only to let land belonging to the parishes to those labourers, but to acquire land for the purpose. Mr. Goschen, on the other hand, held that the amendment was inconsistent with the authorised programme, and denounced the proposal to increase the number of owners of land by means of State machinery. He declared, amid much laughter, that he could not be converted in three days. His speech was received with delight by the Tories, who thought they saw in it the certain sign of a coming rupture in the Liberal ranks. Mr. Balfour observed that there had been a long struggle between Mr. Goschen and Mr. Chamberlain for the possession of Mr. Gladstone, and that it had resulted in the victory of Mr. Chamberlain, who had now got possession of the body and soul of the member for Midlothian. He probably did not contemplate that within a few months Lord Salisbury would be in possession of the body and soul of the member for Birmingham. Much to the surprise of the House the President of the Local Government Board showed that he could be converted in a much shorter period than three days, for he stated that in the Local Government Bill announced in the Royal Speech the Government would propose to give local authorities power to deal with allotments. Of this intention not a word had been heard till that moment, and Mr. Chamberlain made a very effective use of Mr. Balfour's intimation. He congratulated Mr. Jesse Collings on the great conversion that he had effected. Lord Hartington agreed with Mr. Goschen, and said that he never understood

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

that the far and wide reaching principle of Mr. Collings's amendment formed part of the policy of the Liberal party.

The debate, however, was little more than an academic display of rival opinions. The division was the thing, and the amendment was carried by 329 to 270. There was much cheering when the numbers were announced, and Mr. Jesse Collings was in the seventh heaven of delight. He no doubt saw in his mind's eye vast tracts of the country converted into small holdings, but no sooner was the amendment carried than straightway everybody forgot all about it. As a matter of fact Mr. Collings within six months was supporting the men whom he had turned out of office, and nothing effective was done in the way of small holdings till Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government came into office in 1906. The Government resigned, and Mr. Gladstone formed his third ministry with Lord Herschell as Lord Chancellor, Sir W. Harcourt as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Rosebery as Foreign Secretary, Mr. Childers as Home Secretary, Earl Granville as Colonial Secretary, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman as Secretary for War, Mr. John Morley as Chief Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain as President of the Local Government Board, and Sir George Trevelyan as Secretary for Scotland. I may add that Mr. W. H. Smith's tenure of the Irish Office was the shortest on record. He was sworn in on Monday; the Government went out on Wednesday, and when he got back from Ireland he was no longer Chief Secretary.

The new ministers were in due course re-elected, and Parliament re-assembled on February 18. Lord Granville in the House of Lords made a statement regarding a business, the general effect of which according to Lord Salisbury was that the Peers were to be occupied with a Lunacy Bill till April 1, and that on that day

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the Prime Minister would be prepared to give an account of his policy in regard to Ireland. Referring to Mr. Morley's appointment as Chief Secretary the Tory leader said his opinions were well known, and they were entitled to some better explanation than to be referred to April 1. Some one said the Marquis must have renounced the opinions of his life.

The Tories became impatient for the production of Mr. Gladstone's Bill for dealing with the Irish question. They would hardly give the Government time to prepare and mature their scheme, and on going into Committee of Supply on the Irish Estimates, Mr. Holmes, the late Irish Attorney-General, moved a resolution declaring that before proceeding with the Estimates the House ought to be put in possession of the measures that the Government meant to propose for the maintenance of social order in Ireland. Mr. Gladstone treated the proposal with plain, blunt frankness. "I am not such a simpleton," he said, "as to meet the views of hon. gentlemen opposite"; and he added that the proposal to stop the Irish Votes in order to promote social order in Ireland was more Irish than anything he had ever heard in his life. He declared emphatically that Government would not propose coercive legislation, and denounced Mr. Holmes's attempts to inflame religious and race animosities in Ireland. In this debate Lord Randolph Churchill admitted that he had at one time entertained the hope that the Tory party might on many subjects co-operate with the Irish Nationalists. He saw no reason why the Irish party, finding the House opposed to repeal, should not work either with the Conservatives or Liberals; but he had omitted from his calculation the idea that the Prime Minister would ever go in for repeal.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

From this time till the introduction of the Home Rule Bill the proceedings in Parliament were of comparatively little interest. Mr. Gladstone very wisely used the time to pass the Scottish Crofters Act, which was not a subject of acute contention. The dullness of this interregnum was relieved by one of Mr. Labouchere's assaults on the House of Lords. He moved the usual resolution in favour of the abolition of the hereditary principle in the Legislature. The Peers, he said, were powerless for good and powerful for evil. He was good enough, however, to offer Parliament a way of producing capable hereditary legislators. Let them select three hundred or four hundred of the ablest young men in the country and marry them to Girton girls. Lord Hindlip, the head of the Allsopp family, had recently been made a peer, and Mr. Labouchere made an excruciatingly severe examination into his claims for the honour. He would not have objected to the noble lord being made a baronet. "I would no more refuse a baronetcy to a man," said the hon. member, "than I would a thistle to a hungry and a needy donkey." He objected, however, to a man who had brewed beer and made a fortune being made a legislator. Some foolish toady of the new peer had stated that he was descended from the Plantagenets, and Mr. Labouchere repeated this to the House amidst roars of laughter. Even this illustrious descent did not qualify him to be a legislator. The hon. member pointed out that the son of this paternal "Bung," who was in fact a respectable vendor of intoxicating liquors, would also become a legislator. Mr. Labouchere denounced the House of Lords as a Land League which rejected, mutilated, and marred every Liberal Bill. He mentioned the fact that every member of the late Cabinet with two exceptions was a peer or the relative of a peer. The two

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

exceptions were Sir Richard Cross and Mr. W. H. Smith, and they were described by one of their colleagues as "Marshall & Snelgrove." Everybody laughed, and Mr. Smith, who was sitting on the front Opposition bench, turned to Lord R. Churchill and asked what Mr. Labouchere had said. The author of the phrase grew rather red in the face, but I presume that he gave his right hon. friend the information that he desired. Mr. Radcliffe Cook retorted that Mr. Labouchere owned a journal which was a mere court circular, and did nothing but record the sayings and doings and tittle-tattle of the nobility and gentry. Mr. Gladstone treated the subject seriously. He opposed the motion, but his speech was not so much a defence of the Lords as a plea for delay. The nation had much to complain of with regard to the legislative action of the House of Lords, and he could not deny that there was a case for large and important changes. Even though opposed by the Government the motion was defeated only by a majority of 36.

On May 29 it was announced that Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan had resigned, and on April 8 Mr. Gladstone presented his Home Rule Bill. Not since the first Reform Bill has the introduction of any measure created an interest so deep and universal. Members came down early in the morning to take their places, and at midday the lobby was as full of excitement and bustle as if the House were in session. The chamber was not merely crowded, but every coign and every nook from which Mr. Gladstone could be heard was filled. The Prince of Wales (the late King) and Prince Edward came down to hear the Prime Minister's speech. Men of eminence in every walk of life were in the Distinguished Strangers' gallery. The most striking and novel feature in the appearance of the

298

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

House was the space between the bar and table. The House does not accommodate nearly all its members, and in order to allow more of them to be present this portion of the chamber was filled with rows of chairs, the occupants of which heard Mr. Gladstone probably better than any one else except those sitting just opposite to him. The atmosphere was charged with political electricity. Members talked eagerly together. They cheered and shouted on the slightest excuse as a sort of relief to their highly strung feelings. A petition was presented from the City against the establishment of an Irish Parliament, and was welcomed by the Opposition with uproarious delight. Mr. Bright and Lord Hartington as they entered were loudly cheered by the Conservatives. When Mr. Gladstone appeared from behind the Speaker's chair—his face pale, but with an expression of firm and concentrated force—the Liberals and the Nationalists cheered as only men can who are under the influence of strong and deep feeling. There was much waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Several questions stood on the paper, but those in whose name they stood felt that it would be a farce to ask them. They went by the board, and at twenty-five minutes to five—public business then began at half-past four—Mr. Gladstone was on his feet. He was in fine voice, and his tones rang clear and confident throughout the chamber. At the outset he stated that the full policy of the Government covered both land and government, but that to-night he would only deal with government. The coercion applied to Ireland had been spurious and ineffectual, and carried with it the discredit attaching to its foreign origin. He believed that a stern and resolute system of coercion might be successful, but for its success autocracy in government and the secrecy of public transactions were required. He asked

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

in impassioned tones if such a system could be administered in the light of day by the people of Great Britain. The Government had decided to seek the solution of the Irish question by the establishment of a separate legislative body in Dublin, both for legislative and administrative affairs, described by the Bill as Irish as distinguished from Imperial. "That," said Mr. Gladstone, "is the head and front of our offending." If Ireland was to have a separate legislature its members could not come here and control English and Scottish affairs. He discussed the question whether Irish members could still take part in the settlement of Imperial affairs, and made his famous declaration that it passed the wit of man to devise any scheme under which that could be done. He did not foresee that in 1893 he would himself make the attempt to perform the impossible task. I need not go into the details of the Home Rule Bill; but I should mention that when he announced that the Irish members were to be banished from the Imperial Parliament a look of surprise and disappointment passed over the Liberal benches. Mr. Gladstone spoke three hours and twenty-five minutes. Sir G. Trevelyan followed, and attacked the general policy of Home Rule. He felt proud that he would not have on his conscience the responsibility of handing over Ireland to the tender mercies of a Parliament of which Sheridan and Egan would be members. He believed that if the British Parliament bought out the Irish landlords they would never see the colour of their money. "In June last," said the late Secretary for Scotland, "we were all opposed to Home Rule," and he asked what was the explanation of the change. Mr. Parnell accepted the Bill as a whole, but criticised some of its financial provisions. He insisted that the taxable capacity of Ireland was not one-fifteenth, as Mr. Gladstone

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

said, but one-twentieth or one-twenty-second of that of Great Britain. The most dramatic incident in the debate on the introduction of the Bill arose when Mr. Chamberlain explained, or attempted to explain, the reasons that led him to resign. He spoke with great vigour, but not without a touch of regret at parting from his old colleagues. He believed the honour, interests and integrity of the empire to be endangered by Mr. Gladstone's proposals, and he therefore could not remain a member of the Government. He came into direct collision with Mr. Gladstone in one important matter. He desired to go into the land policy of the Government, and had just stated that Mr. Gladstone proposed to raise £120,000,000 of Consols to buy out the landlords, when Mr. Gladstone rose and with manifest displeasure stated that he had not obtained the Queen's permission for the right hon. gentleman to make any explanation in regard to a measure not yet before the House. Mr. Chamberlain was obviously surprised and annoyed at the unexpected check imposed on him, but it called forth exulting cheers from the Irish members. Mr. Gladstone's interference momentarily destroyed the order and coherence of his speech, and it was some time before he regained his ease and self-possession. He told the House that he had resigned in consequence of disagreeing with the combined scheme of the Prime Minister, and he thought that Mr. Gladstone had obtained for him permission from the Queen to explain the whole causes of his resignation. He appealed to the Prime Minister to allow him to proceed, but Mr. Gladstone was inexorable. He would not permit Mr. Chamberlain to touch the yet unexplained Land Bill. Mr. Chamberlain rejoined that this restriction would render his statement lame and incomplete, but he had got out the unpleasant fact that the scheme involved the raising of £120,000,000.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Discussing the Home Rule Bill he strongly objected to the exclusion of the Irish members, and mentioned the interesting fact that in the scheme as it was settled before he left the Cabinet the subject of customs and excise was handed over to the Irish Parliament. He was glad that that part of the scheme had been abandoned. He stated that he himself would seek a solution of the Irish question in the direction of federation. "There are some servile politicians," said Mr. Chamberlain, "who disgrace political life, who have said that I have been guilty of treachery because I could no longer with honour hold the position of a member of the Government. What would these men have been entitled to say of me, if, holding the opinions that I do—opinions which I expressed before I joined the Government—I had remained on that bench pretending to serve the country with a lie on my lips?" The right hon. gentleman in delivering this sentence pointed to the Treasury bench, and his manner and gesture seemed to suggest that men who shared his views still sat upon it. "I would have been guilty of incredible shame and baseness if I had clung to place and office in support of a scheme which in my heart I believed to be injurious to the best interests of England and Ireland." Lord Hartington spoke strongly against the Bill, and declined to believe that there was no alternative between civil war and the abandonment of our privileges and responsibilities. Mr. Morley took a very bold and decisive line in its support. They must either pass this Bill or something like it, or suspend the Constitution in Ireland. He spoke in serious tones of the dangers to which the rejection of this Bill would lead. He did not believe that the Irish Parliament would consist of a body of "ne'er-do-wells." They might be ruder and rougher in manner than the House of Commons, but they would

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

be perfectly capable of legislating for their own country. Lord Randolph Churchill pronounced the safeguards and guarantees of the Bill to be fanciful and eccentric. The scheme involved such an inextricable, such a complicated, such a multitudinous mass of contradictions, that had it not been proposed by the Prime Minister it would not have been considered. Its essential principle was repeal, and the protection of life and property in Ireland would be placed beyond the control of the Imperial Parliament. He did not believe that the appearance of eighty-five Nationalists was sufficient to make the fabric of the Union fall down like the walls of Jericho. Referring to something that Mr. Gladstone had said, he denied that the Irish Channel formed any ground for the repeal of the Union. The first time he had ever met the Prime Minister was in crossing the Channel, and the weather was such as to justify the right hon. gentleman in conceiving an undying animosity to the Irish Sea; but this was the first time that geography had been summoned to the aid of the repeal of the Union. He denied that the law came to the Irish people in a foreign garb, and it was sad to hear the First Minister of the Crown proclaiming that the Irish were aliens. Lord Randolph recalled to the House Mr. Sheil's eloquent repudiation of Lord Lyndhurst's statement that the Irish were aliens in language and race. The speech of the Prime Minister in introducing the Bill he described as a dose of morphia. When you were listening to it the sensations were pleasant, but the recovery was something beyond description. Colonel Saunderson made one of his first appearances in this debate after his return to Parliament. The gallant member, I may say, had been a member of the 1868 Parliament. He was then returned as a follower of Mr. Gladstone, and had supported the Irish Church Bill. He had come back to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

the house as a Conservative of the most orange hue, and henceforth he contributed much to the amusement of the House and occasionally to its scenes. He was bitterly opposed to the Irish party, and on this occasion he described an Irishman as "a man who spoke with a brogue and was disloyal to the Crown." Sir W. Harcourt gave an unhesitating support to the Bill. He asked Mr. Goschen whether he agreed with Mr. Chamberlain's plan of federal government, or, as he put it in another way, whether the skeleton at the feast had settled the bill of fare and whether Rip Van Winkle would be one of the party. He asked the Tories whether they were going to make a policy of "thorough," a policy of Cromwell and Strafford, out of the broken fragments of a shattered party. "I have stood by, and will continue to stand by, the great enterprise of my right hon. friend," concluded Sir W. Harcourt. Mr. Goschen held that the Bill would accomplish a gigantic revolution not only in the legislative work, but in the administrative government, of Ireland. He aroused much fury among the Nationalists by asking how they would deal with conspirators, anarchists and dynamiters; and in reply to the protests from the Irish benches blandly inquired if they could shut the doors on their American allies. Mr. Gladstone rose at midnight on the fourth night of the debate to bring it to a close. He stated that the exclusion of the Irish members was not an essential part of the scheme, and he would not close the door against any proposal on that subject. He protested against the idea that the Irish people had incurable vices or that they had inherited a double dose of original sin. He ridiculed the other schemes which had been suggested, and declared, with passionate energy of voice and gesture, "that this Bill holds the field." No division took place on the introduction of the Bill.

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Two or three days after Mr. Gladstone brought in the Irish Land Bill, and though its proposals added greatly to the unpopularity of the Home Rule Bill they no longer have any importance. In a debate on the Arms Bill introduced by the Government Lord Randolph Churchill defended his statement that "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." In vindication of it he quoted Lord Althorp and Sir Robert Peel, the former of whom said that if it were a question between repeal of the Union and civil war he would prefer civil war. Sir Robert Peel declared that in maintaining the Union the Government might be forced to have recourse to the scaffold, and the plains of Ireland might be deluged with blood. More remarkable, however, was the language which he produced from Mr. Gladstone on the question of civil conflict. In one of his speeches in the campaign on the Franchise Bill in 1884 the Prime Minister said: "If no instructions had been addressed to the people of this country in political crises except to love order and to hate violence and exercise patience, the liberties of this country would never have been attained."

The discussion of the Home Rule Bill in the country was pursued with much keenness and passion. It had not brought peace but a sword, and it cut athwart not merely political associations but family relationships. In a speech delivered outside Parliament Lord Salisbury had declared emphatically that Ireland was not a nation. If by nation, he said, they meant a certain number of individuals collected between certain degrees of latitude and longitude, then Ireland was a nation; but if to make a nation they required a past, united history and traditions in which they could all join, achievements of which they were all proud, then emphatically Ireland was not a nation. Ireland was not one but two nations. It was

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

in this speech that he gave his celebrated recipe for the treatment of Ireland—twenty years of resolute government, and the removal of the people from the congested districts to colonial settlements like Manitoba. Mr. Morley summed up Lord Salisbury's policy in the phrase "manacles and Manitoba," which shows that brilliant writers may occasionally produce rather thin alliterations. When the Tory leader was afterwards twitted with the words "resolute government" he cynically asked the Liberals whether they thought that government should be "irresolute."

The debate on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill began on May 10, and it was the morning of June 8 before the division was taken. The Government were in no hurry to force the debate to a conclusion. They knew that the Bill was in difficulties, and they were desirous to give public opinion time to rally to their support. The discussion was spread, therefore, over a month, and as it went on it became evident that the House of Commons and the country were growingly unfavourable to the measure.

Mr. Gladstone, in moving the second reading, said that an enormous majority of the people of Ireland were in favour of Home Rule. He had faith in representative institutions and would follow them to their legitimate consequences. He spoke with scorn of a judicious mixture of conciliation and coercion. Touching the exclusion of the Irish members he made some fun of those who were more Irish than the Irish themselves, but the Government were desirous of meeting the objections of many of the supporters of the Bill. They would not, however, place the Committee stage before the second reading. They hoped to suppress the National League by the happier method of removing grievances. The

306

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Tory policy, he said, was clear—it was coercion; but had the other opponents of the Bill adopted this policy? This question was pointedly addressed to Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, and was sent home by a great cheer from the Liberal benches. The rejection of the Bill was moved by Lord Hartington, but it is not necessary to follow the debate in any great detail, for the speeches were largely a repetition of the arguments used on its introduction. Parliamentary opinion was declaring itself more and more hostile. The Whig group and the Chamberlain group had in effect made up their minds on the Bill; and whatever doubts they had on the subject were removed by a strong (and still unpublished) letter from Mr. Bright, which was read at one of their meetings. Mr. Gladstone endeavoured to rally his divided forces at a meeting at the Foreign Office, which was held on May 27. The Liberal dislike to the Bill had mainly centred on the banishment of the Irish members, and at this meeting Mr. Gladstone announced that Clause XXIV—the clause excluding the Irish representatives—would be reconstructed. The Prime Minister more than hinted that the Government would be content with the second reading, and would not proceed further with the Bill this session. This statement brought back some of the waverers. In the House of Commons the same night Sir M. Hicks Beach asked whether after the second reading the Bill would be withdrawn. Mr. Gladstone, in one of the finest circumlocutions which he ever uttered, said that “no application would be made to the House to take any further step for the prosecution of the Bill within the compass of the ordinary yearly session.” The leader of the Opposition moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the statement of the Prime Minister with regard to the future course

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

of the Irish Government Bill. He asserted that this measure had now become a mere continuance-in-office Bill. This statement Mr. Gladstone denounced as a most offensive imputation, and declared that he would not condescend to discuss it. The Government tactics, he said, would not be conformed to the suggestions of the Opposition. Ultimately the Government announced that if the Bill were read a second time the session would end by a prorogation as usual. This would, of course, kill it, and Lord Hartington at once observed that they were asked to read a second time a Bill with which there was no intention of going on. "The Bill," said the noble lord emphatically, "is dead," and the Opposition cheered with great enthusiasm. Lord Randolph told the Prime Minister that he was speaking in two voices. He was telling the Irish members that the Bill would be brought in again substantially in its present form, and he was assuring his own supporters that if they voted for the second reading they were not committed to anything. Sir M. H. Beach desired to withdraw the motion for the adjournment, but he would not be allowed, and the Irish members forced a division. All the Liberals, Tories and Home Rulers went into the "No" lobby, with the exception of one Irish member, Mr. Crilly, who was instructed to go into the "Aye" lobby. The result of the division was 1 for the adjournment and 405 against.

In the course of the debate on the second reading Mr. Thorold Rogers gave a definition of a statesman as an "eminent person who is at liberty to change his opinions," and of a politician "as merely a person who is bound to stand by his opinions." Mr. Samuel Storey, a supporter of the Bill, made a very happy quotation. He described Lord Randolph Churchill in the character of Iago standing behind the Speaker's chair, with his

308

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

eyes fixed on Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, and saying—

“Whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,”

the advantage would rest with the Tory party. Mr. Chamberlain, speaking in this debate on June 1, said the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament over Ireland after the Bill was passed would be the same as the supremacy of the Porte over Cyprus—it would be a figment. He suggested the establishment of a legislative body or bodies, of a purely subordinate character, on the model of the provincial assemblies of the Dominion of Canada. Under this scheme Ireland would have full, complete and continuous representation at Westminster, and a legislative body, or bodies, would be established in Ireland strictly subordinate to the Imperial Parliament. He would not have the Irish members omnipotent either at Westminster or Dublin. Mr. Morley in his speech admitted that the Government were on their political deathbed, but they would leave this Bill as their last will and testament. He believed that the country would never reach a settlement of the Irish question except by some measure based on the principle of this Bill. Mr. Goschen hotly repudiated the suggestion of the Prime Minister that the opposition to this Bill was due to class interests. He asked whether Mr. Bright, who was the oldest opponent of the privileged classes in this country, was not opposed to the Bill. Did Mr. Spurgeon belong to the privileged classes, and could Sir William Harcourt—a thrust which went home—say that he did not? On the last night of the debate Mr. Parnell spoke. He admitted that the Irish Parliament would be a subordinate body, but the remarkable feature of his speech was the revelations which he gave as to the negotiations between himself and the late Government regarding

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

Home Rule. He referred to something he had said at Wicklow in the autumn on the subject; and added that when he made that speech he had good reason to believe that if a Conservative Government were returned to power, they would be ready to establish a statutory Parliament in Dublin with the right to protect Irish industries, coupled with a scheme of land purchase larger than that now before the House. This statement produced a profound sensation in the House, and something like dismay on the Tory benches. Sir Michael Hicks Beach at once rose and stated for himself and his colleagues in the most categorical terms that the late Government had no such intention. The Tories, who were afraid that they had been betrayed, gave a great cheer of relief. Mr. Parnell asked if the right hon. gentleman denied that this intention was communicated to him by a minister of the Crown. "Yes, I do, to the best of my knowledge and belief," replied the Tory leader. For a moment the Tory Opposition seemed to lose all control of themselves. Turning to Mr. Parnell they angrily shouted, "Name, name, name," and some of them shook their fists at him. After the wild commotion had somewhat subsided Sir M. H. Beach asked Mr. Parnell the name of the member of the Government who gave him the information. The Irish leader rose, and members thought that they were about to be put in possession of a great secret. Lord Randolph Churchill, who during all this scene had been uneasy and excited, looked anxiously at Mr. Parnell, but that gentleman said that he could not give the name of Sir M. H. Beach's colleague till he received his permission. This reply was received with indignant shouts from the Opposition, and Sir M. H. Beach retorted that the members below the gangway made insinuations, but that their code of honour stepped in when proof

310

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

became possible. I may state that the story of Lord Carnarvon's negotiations with Mr. Parnell came out later, but that the noble lord explicitly said that he had not told his colleagues of these communications. In the House of Lords he denied, as plainly and broadly as he could, the statement that he conveyed to Mr. Parnell the intention of the Government to offer a statutory Parliament with power to protect Irish industries. He told the Irish leader that the conversation was to be for information only, that it must be understood that there was no agreement or understanding between them, and that he would neither hear nor say one word that was inconsistent with the union of the two countries. To these conditions Mr. Parnell assented. The conversation was frank and straightforward and they both left the room as free as when they entered it. Unfortunately Lord Carnarvon did not give Parliament any information as to what he had said, and it is difficult to believe that the Irish leader was wholly mistaken as to the character of the conversation. The debate on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill was brought to a close by Mr. Gladstone. He declared that the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament was absolute and inalienable. All the rival schemes which had been suggested by the critics of the Bill he dismissed as the visionary creations of a vivid imagination born of the hour and perishing with the hour.

The division took place amidst intense excitement. It was believed that the Bill would be rejected; but no one was quite certain, and still less did any one know what the majority would be. Mr. Arnold Morley and Mr. Marjoribanks were tellers for the Bill, and Mr. Brand and Mr. Caine—both Liberal Unionists—against it. As Mr. Gladstone returned from the lobby he was received with much cheering by his supporters, while the Irish

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

members groaned at Mr. Chamberlain. When the paper with the numbers was handed to Mr. Brand a voice from the Irish benches cried, "The Brand of Caine." The whole Tory party bounded to their feet and cheered, shouted and waved their hats till they were exhausted. Then the numbers were announced, and the Bill was rejected by 341 to 311—a majority of 30. The Tories again raised a great cheer, and the Irish members rose and replied to the Tory shouts of triumph by a demonstration of the same character. In the midst of the tumult the voice of Mr. W. O'Brien was heard saying: "Three cheers for the Grand Old Man," and they were given with voice and soul by the Irish party. So ended the struggle on the first Home Rule Bill.

A dissolution followed, and the Liberals were heavily beaten. The Tories and Liberal Unionists came back with a majority of 118, and Home Rule went under for nearly a generation. Its revival in 1893 was little more than a testimony to the greatness of the cause, for with the slender majority which Mr. Gladstone obtained in 1892 it was quite impossible to carry the scheme for establishing a national legislature in Ireland to a successful issue. The Government resigned, and Lord Salisbury and the Unionists entered on a lease of power which, with only an interval of three years, lasted for twenty years. They had their twenty years of resolute government, with the results that we all know.

In the new Government Lord Randolph Churchill obtained the position for which he had designated himself more than three years before. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. Sir Michael Hicks Beach became, as he had been in 1874, Chief Secretary for Ireland; and he was consoled for the loss of the leadership of the House by the assurance that the Irish Office was the most difficult

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

and dangerous post in the Administration. The Earl of Iddesleigh was Foreign Secretary, Mr. Henry Matthews Home Secretary, Sir Richard Cross Indian Secretary, Lord George Hamilton First Lord of the Admiralty, while Mr. A. J. Balfour filled the comparatively humble post of Secretary for Scotland. There was much curiosity and interest regarding the places which the Liberal Unionists would take in the House. They should have sat as supporters of the Government on the Speaker's right, but, on the theory that they were still Liberals, they decided to sit among the Opposition. Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain took their places on the front Opposition bench beside Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt. They were rather aptly described by Mr. Sexton as "a couple of bailiffs placed by the Tory party in possession of the front Opposition bench"; and all through that Parliament the House witnessed the amazing spectacle of one member of the Opposition denouncing another from the same bench and often standing by his side.

Whether Lord Randolph Churchill would have made a great parliamentary leader it is hard to say. He had all the oratorical and debating abilities required for the position. His statesmanship was courageous, if somewhat pliant, but other qualities are needed for successful leadership. He filled the position for so short a period that no one can assert with confidence that he would have risen to the occasion. During the brief session that followed Lord Salisbury's acceptance of office he showed once or twice some irritation and impatience. Nothing is more indispensable in a great parliamentary leader than a serene—one might almost say a seraphic—temper. He must listen submissively to an infinite quantity of twaddle and must not suffer his good-humour to be disturbed by the most dismal

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

bores. He must bear abuse with equanimity and must not allow himself to be angered by the stings or the taunts of his opponents. He must accept with patience and placidity the dislocation of his parliamentary plans and the delay of business by talk and obstruction. Tact and skill in the management of men are also necessary qualifications for political leadership. So far as what may be called the passive qualifications for leadership are concerned no man whom I have seen in that position equalled Mr. W. H. Smith. As a speaker he was matter-of-fact, dull and commonplace. He never, so far as I know, uttered a sentence which was worth remembering. I have heard him often, as the spokesman of his party, wind up a debate, and the operation was almost as mechanical as the winding up of a clock. He had, however, imperturbable good temper and considerable tact. Invective and wit were directed against him in vain. As Mr. Labouchere once said, to attack Mr. W. H. Smith was like assaulting a feather-bed; and as Mr. Disraeli considered a majority the best answer to a repartee, so Mr. Smith regarded the closure as the best reply to a speech. I rather doubt whether Lord Randolph Churchill's mental and temperamental equipment would have enabled him to bear the strain of prolonged and bitter parliamentary contests. Even during the few weeks in which he led the House in 1886 he exhibited some degree of fretfulness and annoyance with the Opposition, but his period of power terminated so early that no one can say whether or not he would have become a great parliamentary statesman.

When Parliament met after the re-election of ministers the Royal Speech did not include the announcement of a Bill for maintaining law and order in Ireland. This fact drew from Mr. Gladstone some very pointed criticism. Last January the Government announced a

314

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

policy of a most repressive kind, but now they were determined to govern Ireland according to the ordinary law. It was a mistake, he said, to postpone any declaration of policy with regard to Ireland till February next. The subject of social order in that country was intimately connected with the question of rent, and it was doubtful whether many of the tenants could pay the judicial rents. Lord R. Churchill offered an ingenious excuse for the Conservative change of front. Since January last Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Parnell had become allies, and a close and indissoluble union had been established between them. He was bound, therefore, to assume that the Irish party would conduct their agitation in a constitutional manner. He found, however, a dangerous significance in Mr. Gladstone's reference to rent. The Government, he said, were determined to maintain order in Belfast, where, I should state, there had been serious disturbances. He admitted that Kerry and some parts of the west were in a disturbed state, and he announced that Sir Redvers Buller had been sent to this part of the country with powers which were sufficient to enable him to restore order.

The Government, however, had evidently some doubts on the subject of judicial rents, for Lord Randolph announced that a Commission would be appointed to inquire into the operation of the Land Act. He also intimated that a small Commission would be charged with the duty of investigating the best means of developing the material resources of Ireland; and, most important of all, that a measure of local government "applicable to the three kingdoms" would be introduced next session. The Government, he said, regarded the verdict of the constituencies as decisive of the question of the legislative union and they would stand by it in its integrity and completeness. This was Lord Randolph's

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

first speech as Leader of the House. In tone and manner it was excellent. There were no personalities and no rhetorical indiscretions, but his announcements with reference to Ireland were received with jeers and laughter by the Nationalists. In the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury had thrown considerably more light on the land policy of the Government. He stated that the Government did not contemplate any revision of judicial rents. If it should turn out that the commissioners under the Land Act had made a mistake, it would be the State and not the landlord that should bear the loss. He hinted pretty plainly at a measure of purchase much larger than that proposed by Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who spoke next night in the House of Commons, asserted that Lord Salisbury's scheme would cost four hundred millions. The hon. member attacked the policy of the Government with great force and said that long before the Commission could report whether rents were fair or not, the Government would be aiding the landlords to exact those rents with the armed forces of the Crown. Sir W. Harcourt, criticising the position of the Government, said that the Tory party had always treated social order as a question by itself, distinct from the condition and interests of the people. That was the principle of Castlereagh and Eldon, but it was not the policy of the Liberal party. He made very effective use of a statement of Mr. Caird—a well-known agriculturist authority in those days—that of the 500,000 holdings in Ireland the vast majority could pay no economic rent. Mr. Chamberlain and "the Birmingham gang," as they were called by the Radicals, were severely handled by Mr. Labouchere. The right hon. gentleman, he said, objected to all schemes for settling the Irish question of which he was not himself the author. He wanted to

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

establish a dictatorship, and as the Radicals would not tolerate this he had gone over to the Tories. Mr. Labouchere declared, much to the amusement of the House, that they would find Mr. Chamberlain some day producing a certificate from the College of Heralds saying that he was descended from the Sieur de Chamberlain of Birmingham who came over with the Sieur de Brassey at the time of the Conquest. Sir M. H. Beach asked the Opposition if rioting in Belfast and moonlighting in Kerry were to go on till the constituencies had decided in favour of Home Rule. The object of the Government, he said, would be to decentralise the government in Ireland and establish it on a popular basis. Lord Hartington made one good point. If the great majority of the holdings in Ireland could pay no economic rent, then the late Government were asking the country to make an enormous advance on a worthless security. The speech of the Irish leader was moderate and prudent. Mr. Parnell did not believe that the people of England would keep a Tory Government in office merely for the sake of preventing Ireland from obtaining Home Rule. The Irish party, he declared, felt that theirs was the winning cause and they had every inducement to be moderate. As to the projected land legislation, the Irish people would decline to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. In a prophetic passage he warned the Government that they would be obliged to resort to coercion, and would strike blindly not only at criminals but at their political enemies. Mr. Chamberlain had thrown in his lot with the Conservatives and he did not shrink from the consequences. He told the Liberals that if they were going to unite with the Parnellites in making the government of Ireland impossible they would wander long in the wilderness. In his speech he asserted that the House

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

was pledged to deal with the land question as an obligation of honour, but Mr. Sexton very happily retorted that the right hon. gentleman might adopt the words of Lady Teazle: "Do you not think that we had better leave honour out of the question?" After several days had been spent on the Address, Dr. Clark moved the adjournment of the debate with the view of submitting an amendment relative to Scotland. On this proposal Lord Randolph had his first brush with the Opposition. He was annoyed at the prolongation of the debate and he resisted the motion on the ground that the proceedings were not for the public advantage or with a view to the despatch of business. Mr. Illingworth described the language of the noble lord as "Satan rebuking sin," and Mr. T. P. O'Connor said that the noble lord had climbed to his present position by obstruction. The Leader of the House had to give way and the Scotchmen had their day. Then came a debate on the Belfast riots. Colonel Saunderson denied that the members of the Orange Lodge took a terrible oath. Their meetings were opened with prayer, and one of those prayers was that the Roman Catholics might be converted from their ways, a revelation of Orange piety which greatly amused the Catholic members. He declared, like some of his successors, that if Parliament passed a law that would hand over a large part of the population of Ireland to the tender mercies of the Irish party, they would be justified in the last resort in appealing to force. Mr. Morley bluntly told the gallant member that the language he had used was not the language of civil war but of a rebel, a stroke which seemed to penetrate the thick armour of the Orangeman. The late Chief Secretary poured scorn on the theory that no Government could introduce a Bill for conferring self-government on Ireland because it might lead

PARLIAMENTARY REMINISCENCES

to riots and disturbances. Sir W. Harcourt gave a very severe castigation to the Leader of the House. He recalled Lord Randolph's boastful declaration that he went to Belfast as "the descendant of Marlborough and the relative of Castlereagh," and he invited the Whig Unionists to say what they thought of the noble lord's warlike jingle—"Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." The party to whose prejudices the noble lord had appealed, and whose passions he had attempted to inflame, had been the curse of Ireland. To this attack the noble lord made no answer, and then Mr. Labouchere moved an amendment directly censuring his language at Belfast. Lord Randolph replied that "in vain was the net spread in the sight of any bird," and he declined to defend his language for the reason that it would inflame party passion. At last the long-drawn-out debate on the Address came to an end, but the Government had to give Mr. Parnell two days for the discussion of a Bill which he introduced dealing with some branches of the Irish land question. The session came to a close on September 25, but before the prorogation Sir M. H. Beach, who had some knowledge of the state of affairs in Ireland, said that it might be necessary to apply to Parliament for special powers.



INDEX

- ABBOT, 37
 Aberdare, Lord, 65
 Alcester, Lord, 234, 238
 Allen, 76
 Althorp, Lord, 305
 Anderson, George, 53
 Argyll, Duke of, 48, 181, 281, 282
 Ashbourne, Lord, 227, 228, 235, 270
 Ashley, Evelyn, 85
 Asquith, H. H., 10-12, 134
 Astley, John, 83
 Ayrton, 41, 45, 46, 49, 50, 65, 66

 Baines, Sir E., 20
 Baird, James, 179
 Baker, Colonel, 111
 Balfour, Arthur J., 9, 36, 111, 132, 133, 175, 209, 210, 220, 237, 249, 262, 294
 Banbury, Sir F., 3
 Barclay, J. W., 55
 Baring, Sir E., 257
 Barttelot, Sir Walter, 247
 Bates, Sir E., 94, 96
 Baxter, W. E., 65
 Beach, Sir M. H., 204, 247, 253, 257, 278, 280, 292, 307-310
 Becker, Miss, 103
 Bentinck, Cavendish, 39, 137
 Biddulph, 216
 Biggar, 87, 88, 91, 92, 114, 115, 133, 135, 138, 161, 170, 171, 172, 199, 200, 214, 217, 242
 Bourke, Robert, 244, 245, 252
 Bowles, Gibson, 69
 Boycott, Captain, 178
 Bradlaugh, Charles, 51, 76, 149-153, 157-161, 185, 193-199, 225, 234-237, 246, 247, 258

 Brand, 47, 158, 179, 310, 311
 Bridges, Sir B., 25
 Briggs, 163, 164
 Bright, Jacob, 134, 168
 Bright, John, 2, 6, 7, 15, 23, 26, 61, 64, 66, 82, 84, 86, 104, 118, 138, 139, 144, 152, 157, 161, 168, 170, 171, 193, 200, 201, 207, 240, 241, 283, 299, 306, 309
 Broadhurst, Henry, 195
 Bruce, 65
 Bryan, 92
 Burdett-Coutts, Baroness, 29
 Bury, Lord, 51
 Butt, Isaac, 77, 89, 105

 Caine, W. S., 310
 Cairns, Lord, 126, 266, 267
 Callan, Philip, 140, 198, 217
 Cambridge, Duke of, 38
 Campbell-Bannerman, Sir H., 31, 32, 268, 295
 Campbell, Sir G., 93, 110, 111
 Cardwell, 38, 40
 Carey, James, 226, 228
 Carnarvon, Lord, 286
 Carson, Sir Edward, 29
 Cavendish, Lord F., 34, 65, 150, 203, 206, 207
 Cecil, Lord Robert, 11, 15, 16
 Challemel-Lacour, M., 154, 155, 157
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 138, 139, 197, 198, 207, 231, 255, 266, 268, 277, 281-284, 293-298, 301-304, 308-311
 Chaplin, 92, 108, 109, 112, 113, 123, 203, 206, 245, 261, 271, 293
 Chelmsford, Lord, 133, 134

INDEX

- Childers, 66, 200, 216, 272, 273,
278, 295
Churchill, Lord R., 108, 122, 123,
132, 152, 155, 161, 163, 168,
175, 180, 182-188, 194-199,
218-222, 225, 226, 228, 232-
240, 244, 245, 247, 251-268,
274-283, 292, 297, 298, 302-310
Clarence, Duke of, 298
Clark, Sir Andrew, 225
Clarke, Sir Edward, 147, 271
Cobden, Richard, 2, 7, 8, 17, 22, 23
Cochrane, Baillie, 39
Cockburn, Lord Chief Justice, 86
Collier, Sir Robert, 47, 48, 49
Collings, Jesse, 293, 294, 295
Collins, Thomas, 3, 44
Cooke, Radcliffe, 298
Cork, Earl of, 130
Courtney, Lord, 114, 141, 223
Cowen, Joseph, 25, 101, 155, 179,
221
Cowper, Lord, 202
Craig, Captain, 293
Crichton, Lord, 245
Crilly, 308
Cross, Sir Richard, 71, 76, 148,
172, 234, 281, 297
Curtis, Byron, 289

Davis, Jefferson, 5
Davitt, Michael, 168, 175, 179, 203
Dawnay, Colonel, 254
Delahunty, 116
Denison, 36
Derby, Lord, 70, 117, 121, 122,
125, 126
Dilke, Sir Charles, 32, 51, 53, 134,
135, 154, 244, 252, 266, 278
Dillon, 162, 170, 176, 177, 180,
194, 202, 204, 205, 207, 208,
212, 213, 214, 215
Dillwyn, 22, 122
Disraeli, Benjamin, 1, 2, 5, 9,
11, 14, 16, 17, 21, 23, 26, 27,
29, 30, 45, 49, 57, 58, 60, 61,
62, 69-86, 93-100, 102-107,
117, 118, 119, 123-128, 146,
182, 188, 221

Dodson, 53
Dowse, Baron, 43
Duckham, 56
Duff, Grant, 19
Dyke, Sir W. H., 110, 221, 222,
293

Edmondstone, Sir William, 145
Edward VII, King, 298
Egan, 189, 190, 300
Elcho, Lord, 10, 39
Elphinstone, Sir James, 39, 40
Emmott, Lord, 223
Erskine, Sir David, 192
Espen, Van, 79
Eversley, Lord, 2

Fawcett, 58, 122, 138
Finigan, 161, 178
Fisher, 35
Fitzmaurice, Lord E., 45, 58, 252
Fitzwilliam, 285
Forster, W. E., 33, 43, 44, 54, 75,
88, 114, 118, 120, 138, 149, 156,
161-170, 190, 195, 200-210, 215,
228-232, 249, 259, 260, 271,
277, 278
Fortescue, Chichester, 42
Fowler, Sir R., 63, 151
Freeman, 108

Gibson, Edward, 16, 227, 228, 235,
270
Giffard, Sir H., 110, 281
Gladstone, Herbert, 88, 181, 196,
199, 287, 288, 290
Gladstone, W. E., 1, 5, 7, 9, 12,
16, 20, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30,
33, 35, 39, 40, 41, 45, 47-51,
54-82, 90, 91, 99, 100, 103, 108-
113, 118-121, 125-128, 149, 154-
178, 182-197, 201-204, 209, 212,
213, 217-225, 234-281, 285-
311
Glyn, 53
Gordon, General, 248, 254, 257,
258, 259, 270, 272, 277
Gordon, Lord, 53

INDEX

- Gorst, Sir John, 151, 152, 161,
 226, 227, 228, 231
 Goschen, 38, 44, 73, 76, 294, 304,
 309
 Grantham, Justice, 133
 Granville, Lord, 126, 127, 149,
 267, 268, 295
 Gray, E. D., 168
 Grey, Sir G., 54
 Griffith, Darby, 24, 25
 Grosvenor, Captain, 24
 Grosvenor, Lord R., 177, 279
 Guinness, Sir Benjamin, 28
 Gurney, Russell, 78

 Halsbury, Lord, 281
 Hamilton, Lord Claud, 52, 231,
 261, 277
 Hampton, Lord, 83
 Harcourt, Sir W., 34, 49, 53, 54,
 56, 59, 64, 66, 67, 78, 79, 80,
 90, 114, 115, 120, 122, 126, 136,
 149, 156, 161, 175, 179, 180,
 206, 207, 210, 215, 216, 226,
 227, 233, 253, 271, 280, 283, 286,
 288, 295, 299, 304, 307
 Hardie, Keir, 51
 Hardy, Gathorne, 17, 18, 27, 28,
 34, 49, 59, 78, 107, 118, 119
 Hartington, Lord, 42, 43, 82, 83,
 99, 120, 127, 129, 130, 139, 140,
 141, 149, 161, 186, 225, 256,
 259, 260, 272, 276, 288, 292,
 294, 302-306, 309
 Hatherley, Lord, 48
 Headlam, 52
 Healy, Timothy, 180, 187, 190,
 201, 216, 217, 241, 242, 243,
 250, 253, 255, 256
 Henley, 11
 Hennessy, Pope, 7, 18
 Henry, Mitchell, 143, 163, 189
 Herbert, Auberon, 52, 53
 Herschell, Sir F., 187, 295
 Hindlip, 297
 Holmes, 296
 Hope, Beresford, 45, 132, 133,
 153
 Horsman, 1

 Hume, Joseph, 8, 9
 Hunt, Ward, 41, 73

 James, Sir H., 221, 253
 Jenkins, Edward, 105, 133, 134,
 136

 Kelly, 178
 Kenealy, Dr., 84, 85, 86
 Kenny, 261

 Labouchere, 157, 158, 162, 174,
 219, 220, 234, 236, 237, 246,
 253, 254, 274, 297, 298
 Lansdowne, Lord, 163, 298
 Lawson, Sir W., 53, 76, 130, 144,
 145, 219, 234, 239, 249, 251,
 255, 259, 281
 Layard, Sir H., 7, 17, 18, 119,
 120, 134
 Leatham, 64, 104
 Lewis, Charles, 102
 Lindsay, 6, 7
 Lloyd, Clifford, 201
 Lopes, Sir Massey, 53, 83, 84
 Lowe, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 26, 36,
 41, 42, 59, 64, 65, 66, 85, 97,
 98, 102, 103, 128, 134
 Lowther, James, 142
 Lumsden, Sir Peter, 276
 Lyndhurst, Lord, 303

 McCarthy, 18, 168, 169, 173, 217,
 283
 McCoan, 178, 237, 238
 McCombie, 41
 Macfarlane, 210
 Manners, Lord John, 59
 Marjoribanks, 310
 Marriott, 197
 Marvin, Charles, 124
 Maurice, 1
 Maxwell, Sir Herbert, 232
 Maxwell, Sir Stirling, 71, 72
 Mellor, 223
 Miall, E., 35, 36
 Mill, John Stuart, 23, 24
 Milman, 178
 Monsell, 42, 65

INDEX

- Montague, Lord R., 72
 Morley, 91, 237, 244, 249, 260,
 266, 286, 289, 290, 295, 302,
 305, 308, 310
 Mudford, 289

 Newdegate, 83, 92, 93, 114
 Noel, 216
 Nolan, Major, 138
 Northcote, Henry, 181
 Northcote, Sir S., 9, 10, 71, 72,
 101, 107, 113, 117, 120, 121,
 124, 141, 148, 150, 155, 156,
 159, 160, 161, 172, 175, 185,
 188, 194, 195, 198, 199, 203,
 225, 233, 236, 237, 238, 240,
 246, 249, 253, 256, 263, 264,
 265, 268, 270, 280, 281

 O'Brien, Barry, 90, 91, 211, 237,
 238, 242, 243, 261, 271, 272
 O'Brien, Sir P., 31
 O'Brien, William, 311
 O'Connell, 91
 O'Connor, T. P., 18, 19, 166, 167,
 173, 190, 201, 241
 O'Donnell, F. H., 112, 114, 115,
 138, 154, 155, 156, 157, 164,
 167, 170, 178, 179, 216, 217,
 229, 246
 O'Donoghue, The, 237
 O'Gorman, Major, 87, 89, 129,
 130
 O'Kelly, 18, 19, 194, 202, 204,
 205, 230, 237, 238
 O'Reilly, 60
 Orton, Arthur, 86
 Osborne, Bernal, 16, 42, 43, 44, 60
 O'Shea, Captain, 205, 208
 O'Shea, Mrs., 212
 Ossington, Viscount, 47
 O'Sullivan, 144
 Otway, Sir Arthur, 137

 Pakington, Sir John, 43, 44
 Palmerston, Lord, 1, 2, 3, 4, 15,
 18, 19, 22, 24, 142, 237
 Parker, C. S., 71
 Parnell, 89, 90, 91, 112-115, 135-
 138, 140, 141, 143, 160, 163,
 165-169, 171, 174, 175, 177,
 178, 179, 188-191, 194, 195,
 196, 202, 204-212, 214, 215,
 216, 227, 229-232, 245, 246,
 249, 252, 279, 286, 292, 300,
 309, 310
 Peel, Arthur, 39
 Peel, Sir Robert, 23, 134, 182,
 223, 225, 237, 247, 255, 271,
 305
 Pell, 264
 Percy, Earl, 150
 Persia, Shah of, 63
 Playfair, Sir Lyon, 216
 Plimsoll, 93-96
 Power, O'Connor, 114, 115, 138,
 140, 142, 143, 144, 163, 189,
 190, 212, 213, 215, 249, 250
 Price, Bonamy, 181
 Price, Captain, 156

 Raikes, Cecil, 221
 Rathmore, Lord, 44
 Ravensworth, Lord, 171
 Rawlinson, Sir H., 63
 Read, C. S., 264
 Redmond, John, 175, 179, 202
 Reid, Sir Wemyss, 286, 287, 288,
 289
 Richard, H., 35
 Richmond, Duke of, 40
 Ripon, Lord, 65
 Ritchie, Lord, 123
 Roberts, Lord, 186
 Roebuck, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 17, 122,
 134
 Rogers, Thorold, 153, 223, 308
 Rosebery, Lord, 265, 281, 282,
 295
 Rossmore, Lord, 245, 246
 Russell, George, 188, 215
 Russell, Earl, 17, 128
 Russell, Lord Odo, 123
 Russell of Killowen, 149
 Rutland, Duke of, 28

 St. Aldwyn, Lord, 2

INDEX

- Salisbury, Lord, 11, 30, 48, 67,
71, 80, 81, 121, 123, 125, 126,
183, 195, 218, 265, 267, 268,
269, 280, 286, 291, 295, 305,
311
- Sandon, Lord, 135
- Saunderson, Colonel, 303
- Sclater-Booth, 123
- Sexton, 197, 204, 210, 212, 292
- Sheehy, Father, 191
- Sheil, 303
- Sheridan, T. P., 227, 228, 231,
300
- Smith, Sydney, 81
- Smith, W. H., 24, 188, 260, 261,
281, 293, 295, 297, 298
- Smollett, 73, 74, 104, 107
- Smyth, P. J., 104, 105
- Spencer, Lord, 202, 204, 215, 231,
241
- Spurgeon, 309
- Stalbridge, Lord, 279
- Stanhope, E., 156
- Stanley, Colonel, 129, 137, 138,
261
- Stansfeld, 14, 15
- Stewart, Colonel, 276
- Storey, Samuel, 308
- Sturt, Gerard, 92
- Sullivan, A. M., 83, 84, 139, 143,
162, 174
- Taylor, P. A., 4, 75, 76
- Tennyson, Alfred Lord, 252
- Thirlwall, Dr., 28
- Torrens, McCullagh, 120
- Tottenham, Colonel, 18
- Trevelyan, Sir George, 38, 74, 75,
111, 200, 231, 241, 256, 268,
295, 298, 300
- Walter, 100
- Waring, Colonel, 293
- Watkin, Sir E., 285
- Wellington, Duke of, 128
- Wemyss, Earl of, 2
- Westbury, Lord, 48
- Westminster, Duke of, 130
- Whalley, 74, 85, 87, 92, 93
- Wharton, 153, 272
- Wheelhouse, 144, 145
- Wilkes, Washington, 15
- Williams, 9
- Williamson, Sir Hedworth, 39
- Willoughby, Sir H., 7
- Winn, Rowland, 278, 299
- Winterbotham, 35
- Wolff, Sir H. D., 151, 152, 162
- Wolseley, Lord, 219, 233
- Wood, Sir Charles, 19
- Woodfall, 262
- Yorke, Eliot, 113
- Young, Lord, 178, 179

RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E.,
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

FEB 18 1946

JUN 2 1947

DEC 1 1947

OCT 27 1961

Form L-8
25m-10, '44 (2491)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

DA
560 Jeans -
J34p Parliamentary
reminiscences.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 952 174 1

~~Wm. H. Rutledge~~

DA
560
J34p



